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THE BATTLE OF THE ROSEBUD  
CROOK'S  
CAMPAIGN OF 1876

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

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West Virginia, 1980

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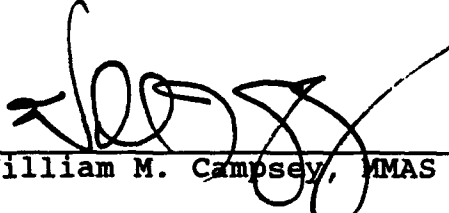
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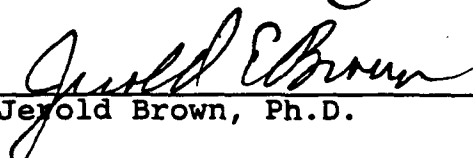
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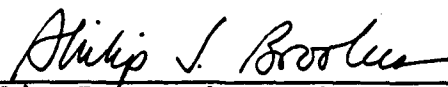
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# ABSTRACT

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This study of the "Battle of the Rosebud" shows parallels between the army of 1876 and our army today. It briefly investigates the linkage of National Policy, political objectives, National Military Strategy, and the operational level of war. The army of 1876, like the army of today, experienced drastic downsizing. It had problems adjusting doctrine to the type of fight they were experiencing, not unlike our experience in Vietnam. The study of the battle provides some lessons we have had to relearn in the recent past. It is a study of how a relatively small, unsophisticated culture fought and won against an adversary that was vastly superior in population, organization, technology and resources. As a secondary benefit, the study of this battle offers a look at the advantages, disadvantages and compromises that must be considered in combined warfare. For these reasons, this study holds powerful lessons for soldiers serving in our armed forces today. The struggles with doctrine, training the force, force structure, combined warfare, and leadership challenges are just some of the parallels that can be drawn between Crook's Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition and our modern units.

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*To Dad,  
who always set the example,  
fought two major wars  
and taught me what professionalism was all about*

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The "Battle of the Rosebud" was a major American frontier battle that took place on June 17, 1876. It involved larger United States Army forces than the more famous battle at the Little Big Horn, which took place one week later. It was part of the three-pronged operational Campaign designed by General Philip Sheridan to defeat the Sioux and Cheyenne in the uncaded Indian Territory located in present day South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming.

The study of this battle provides a close look at our national military heritage with lessons that could easily be applied to our modern day armed forces. The army that fought the Centennial Campaign of 1876 was a post-Civil War army that experienced vast draw downs. The Army also conducted combined warfare against the Sioux, which both greatly enhanced and hindered the Army's war effort. This battle highlights some of the problems that a small post-war army can experience when its responsibilities are far greater than its resources. It poses questions about 19th century operational art and tactics and how they were implemented to defeat a supposedly inferior military force.

To fully understand this battle, and how it fits into the Centennial Campaign of 1876, one must first understand the cultural conflict between the Sioux-Cheyenne Nation and the United States, vital interests of both sides, and the basic organization and tactics of both sides.

### Culture

**Plains Indian.** The culture of the Mississippi Valley tribes, the larger groups being the Dakotas (later known as the Sioux), Kiowa, Comanche, Arapaho and Crow, was agrarian based and sedentary in nature prior to the 18th Century. They settled in permanent camps, grew maize, beans, squash, and hunted small game, deer, and bear when they could get it. Their only mode of transportation was either by foot or, if they were near water, by canoe. They settled mostly along the eastern rim of the Missouri, from as far north as the present day Dakotas down to Mississippi.

In 1598, the Spanish introduced the horse to the southern plains. Over the next two hundred years, with mastery of the horse and pressure from white civilizations, the western tribes of the Mississippi Valley pushed out into the game rich Plains. Prior to the introduction of the horse, man could not sustain life on the Plains. However, if he were highly mobile to pursue the estimated 75 million buffalo, gather the wild fruits of the Plains, acquire

materials from the few trees to provide lodge poles and materials for weapons, he could provide a rich and fulfilling life for his family. These tribes thus evolved into a nomadic hunter and warrior culture. It was no longer acceptable to grow food and stay in one place. With their new mobility, they could follow and hunt the vast buffalo herds, living off of what nature provided.

To acquire additional tribal wealth, they developed a warrior culture, taking what they wanted from other tribes or settlers when they were strong enough to get it. The major source of wealth and power came from enlarging the tribe's pony herds. The bigger the herd, the more power the tribe could project and dominate the prime hunting grounds.

The Sioux and Cheyenne were the last of the Mississippi Valley tribes to be pushed out into the Plains. Around the time of the American Revolution, the Chippewas, who acquired guns from French and English fur traders, drove the Sioux across the Missouri River, west into the Plains. The Sioux Nation was made up of thirteen tribes. They soon mastered the horse, and with their confederation, organized a large military alliance dominating the Plains throughout most of the 19th Century. They declared war on all competing tribes that stood in their way for the domination of the vast hunting region stretching from the Missouri River on the east, north and west to the Black Hills, and to the Platte River in the south. With the horse, the Sioux

became the superior hunter and warrior that dominated the Plains, driving fear in neighboring tribes.

The Plains Indians' culture was a highly individualistic society. Individual warriors conformed to their own standards of conduct. The Plains Indian was not judged on his material wealth or his possessions, but by his great deeds. Material wealth did not play a part in the nomadic society of the Indian who could live very comfortably off the land and had no need to drag around large possessions. A warrior was judged on his bravery and his skills as a warrior and hunter. Forming raiding parties and stealing horses and weapons from competing tribes were a measure of one's status in the Plains Indian Society. If a great warrior captured large herds and plundered, he was expected to share with other warriors who were less skilled to strengthen the tribe's overall strength.<sup>1</sup>

**United States.** The United States was driven by "Manifest Destiny" after the Civil War. A growing number of Americans had little opportunity for advancement east of the Missouri after the devastation of the war. This lack of opportunity and increased European emigration set the stage for American expansion west for new opportunities to improve their standard of living.

Each individual was out to improve his standard of living through exploitation of the land that would prove profitable in the quest of material goods. The exploitation

process and collection of material goods were at least to some degree governed by law. Ostensibly, citizens had the right to pursue their American dreams as long as they stayed within the constraints of the law. However, on the frontier it was difficult at best to enforce these laws, particularly those laws prohibiting trespass on Indian territory.

**Conflict.** The Plains Indians and western cultures were in direct conflict. The Indians believed that no one really owned the land, it was there for the temporary use of the strongest party for as long as it provided the necessities of life. As soon as nature stopped providing the necessities, the tribes moved to greener pastures. There were no boundaries. The strong decided where to go. Spiritually, the Indian believed he was one with nature and must live in harmony with the land.

The western culture believed that God made nature a servant of man, and he was free to exploit nature to better himself. The land had boundaries and owners to work and exploit the resources to provide a better way of life for the individual or groups working the land.

When two societies have such conflicting cultural values and overlapping interest, war is usually inevitable. There were peace makers on both sides from the first confrontations with the Sioux to the conclusion of the Sioux Wars of 1876, but none could prevent the cultural clash. One side would have to transform their basic cultural

beliefs before these two peoples could live in harmony with each other. John S. Gray, author of Centennial Campaign, The Sioux War of 1876, states: "Nothing so devastates the spirit of a people as the destruction of its cultural heritage, which alone gives meaning and guidance to life."<sup>2</sup> Both cultures were willing to fight and die to defend their way of life.

### Organization and Tactics

**Plains Indian.** The Indian way of war was simple. It centered around the very culture of the tribe. Rituals, taboos, and religion set the conduct of war in this warrior society. They had a distinctive value system that made plunder and combat honors as much the motivation and goal as defense of the village.

Like the society, wars were fought on an individual level. They would mass in battle; however, they did not fight as an organization, but as a group of individual warriors, dueling with the other side. The Indian could pick when, where, and who he was going to fight. He could choose when to retire from battle. Tribal chiefs only had the power of persuasion and often had to share their power with great war chiefs. A war chief was a warrior who had earned the respect and admiration as a great warrior by his fellow warriors and had the charisma to lead who ever would follow.

Inter-tribal warfare rarely became full scale fights. Each side would demonstrate their ferocity from a distance with a series of individual duels. For example, the Crows would line up on one side of the battlefield with the Sioux on the other. Individual warriors would ride into the enemy line under a hail of arrows and some gun fire, "counting coup,"<sup>3</sup> and ride as fast as his pony would take him back to friendly lines. The object was to look good and earn glory for brave deeds, not necessarily to destroy the enemy.

Warriors usually fought from the horse. He had the skill to ride over rough terrain, and shoot without exposing any vital parts of his body to the enemy. His horsemanship was unparalleled in the world, and even the cavalry rated him the best in the world. Logistically, warriors would operate out of their village. The village was a remarkably versatile society that could pack and move on fifteen minutes notice. If needed, the warriors could sustain small forces off the land and cover great distances in short periods of time. He rarely let himself get decisively engaged unless he had overwhelming odds.

The outcome of battles was usually decided with the smaller force retiring from the battlefield. It was honorable for an outnumbered Indian force to retire from battle without being decisively engaged, so they could fight another day. At the end of the battle warriors from both



sides would mourn the few dead and celebrate the new honors won in battle.

**United States Army.** The army was small through most of the nineteenth century, and only increased its size and organization to meet threats to national security, for instance, during the War with Mexico, and the American Civil War. The small size of the army did not relieve it from the mission to protect the large expanse of territory the United States was acquiring.

The 1800s were characterized with the constant nuisance of Indian trouble throughout the western frontier and Florida with relatively short major conflicts spread throughout the century. Robert M. Utley, in his book Frontier Regulars states: "... with brief interludes of foreign and civil war, Indian service was the primary mission of the army."<sup>4</sup> The civilian and military leadership of the United States had difficulty formulating the Indian threat into a national security policy. They had no formal Indian doctrine or clear strategy on how to deal with the problem.

The Indian threat was unique for the 19th century.

First it pitted the army against an enemy who usually could not be clearly identified and differentiated from kinsmen not disposed at the moment to be enemies. Indians could change with bewildering rapidity from friend to foe to neutral, rarely could one be confidently distinguished from another.<sup>5</sup>

The civilian and military leadership had two courses of action. First, they could organize a conventional army, building companies, regiments, divisions and corps. Then they would concentrate this force in a few strategic locations for training units in higher level tactics and growing leaders capable of large unit maneuver. This course of action would take a large investment and would still fall short of providing security on the frontier against the Indian threat.

The second course of action was to organize a frontier army with its forces spread thin to cover as much territory as possible. The settlers and politicians demanded protection in close proximity to their settlements and the routes of travel to and from those settlements. The leadership chose the latter and adopted a frontier army organized more as a large police force instead of a conventional army.

The organization of the frontier army seemed to pacify the settlers and the politicians because the army was visible and close at hand. However, they were not very effective as a fighting force. This policy allowed the Indian to fight on his own terms. He could pick the time, and the place to fight, thus ensuring overwhelming numbers.

Between major conflicts the frontier army had massive challenges in securing the frontier. At the height of the Civil War, the north had four million men in uniform

and the south had 1.5 million men. By 1866, the government forced the army's number down to fifty-seven thousand, and in 1869 to twenty-five thousand. This meager force was all there was to secure the nation against external threats and secure the frontier.<sup>6</sup> The dispersed garrisons proved too few and too weak to present an effective defense.

In the offense, the army took too long to assemble a large force. Once the force was assembled, it lacked the mobility to decisively engage the Indians. Most alert tribes could easily elude an approaching column. The army also was tied to its logistic tail. It often could move no further or faster than the wagons that supported them.

Training as a large force was almost non-existent between major conflicts. The organization of company size garrisons and a few battalion size garrisons left few opportunities to grow the leaders necessary to maneuver brigades, divisions and corps, let alone armies. When the frontier army had to mass for a specific campaign, it was done by throwing together several geographically separated smaller units together. Leaders who were familiar with training at platoon and company level were finding themselves leading battalion and regimental size units. General standards were not established. Throughout the army each unit had its own standing operating procedures and standards. When thrown together, they rarely had the

opportunity to train as a larger unit and resolve their differences in tactics, techniques and procedures.

However, there were common threads in the army. It employed basic infantry tactics on the frontier. The cavalry fought as mounted infantry. It used the shock of the cavalry charge to dislodge the enemy and then quickly dismounted to inflict casualties. Loading, aiming and shooting at a gallop from a horse was ineffective. Few could hit their target unless they dismounted and took up a stable firing position.

The army recognized the Indian's mobility and agility in battle. They did not have the ability to fix and fight a group of warriors and bring them to ground. Therefore, hitting the Indians' logistic base (the village) became a prime tactic. The objective was to destroy the enemy's food stores, shelter, and capture or destroy any weapons that could be found. Deprived of their subsistence, the Indians would capitulate and accept reservation life. The village was full of women and children who became victims of these attacks. With their families threatened, the Indians would usually stand and fight, even against overwhelming odds to defend their village.

#### The Generals

**Crazy Horse** was one of the greatest war chiefs that the Plains Indian tribes produced. Born around 1841, he had a typical warrior upbringing in the Plains Indian culture.

He enjoyed all the individual freedoms that his cultural heritage provided. He also had developed the deep seated values that were inherent in nomadic life. From adolescence to young manhood he was busy developing his hunting and warrior skills. During his early manhood, 1858 through 1865, he and his people enjoyed relative freedom from the white man's interference. During these years he built a reputation as a great hunter and daring warrior. At this time the Sioux were at their peak. Nature provided all their needs. They enjoyed individual freedoms and expression not even found in our democratic society. Life could not have been better.

As Crazy Horse's reputation grew, he led numerous raids against the Crow and Shoshone. Other warriors flocked to him, believing he had very strong medicine. They knew when Crazy Horse went into battle the chances of success were very high. He never left the dead or wounded on the battlefield if it could be helped. Crazy Horse usually preferred to fight alone or in small bands. He was similar to Crook in that he was quiet and somewhat introverted with a talent for waging war. He was humble among his people, thinking of himself as a simple warrior, often giving away what he captured from raids to the less fortunate. He did the same when he went on hunting trips. He loved to go out hunting before dawn and bring in a deer, an elk, or a buffalo for the less fortunate.

Crazy Horse was one of the few Sioux that would dismount to shoot. It was said that he did this because he always liked to hit what he aimed at.<sup>7</sup> The Indian, like the Cavalry, had a hard time with marksmanship while on the back of a running horse.

In 1866, while still a young warrior, Crazy Horse led the decoy force that lured Captain William J. Fetterman and eighty soldiers into Red Cloud's ambush near Fort Phil Kearny. The Fetterman massacre eventually led to the Treaty of 1868.<sup>8</sup> By 1875, when the winds of war were blowing again, Crazy Horse was recognized as the greatest warrior chief of the Sioux. However, he did not care for politics. He would lead those who wanted to follow him in battle but would have nothing to do with decisions in council, treaty negotiations or the like. Crazy Horse was a very capable leader, and he was among the very few that could inspire the Sioux to fight and win against a large cavalry force at that time.

Brigadier General George Crook was born September 8, 1828, near Dayton, Ohio. He received an appointment to West Point in 1848 and graduated in 1852 near the bottom of his class. He was somewhat of an introvert, known for his quite demeanor and good behavior while attending the Academy. Crook was a classmate of General Philip Sheridan. They shared their first assignment together with the 4th Infantry in northern California. After a short assignment

there, Crook was transferred to Oregon and Washington. During the Rogue River War in Oregon, he was wounded in the right hip with an arrow. He pulled the shaft out, but carried the arrow head in his hip for the rest of his life. When the Civil War began, he received a colonelcy in the 36th Ohio Volunteers. This unit was assigned to West Virginia where Crook earned his first combat honors on May 23, 1862, when his brigade drove a confederate force under General Henry Heth out of Lewisburg with heavy confederate losses.

He was soon given command of a four regiment brigade, and was promoted to Brigadier General on September 7, 1862. In 1863, he was transferred to the western theater and took command of a cavalry division in George H. Thomas' Army of the Cumberland. Crook was seen as a rising star and was transferred back to West Virginia. General Grant gave him a separate command of eight thousand troopers to strike at key operational targets in Virginia and Tennessee. Rutherford B. Hays, the future president of the United States, stated that "Crook had led the fight in person and was the finest general he had seen since the war, except Rosecrans."

Crook had developed into a good leader and was praised for the efficient and professional manner in which he handled his command. By 1864, he was commanding a Corps with two divisions in Sheridan's command. On October 19,

1864, Crook's Corps was surprised at Ceder Creek and was routed by a Confederate dawn attack. His command was in disarray when his old classmate and boss, Sheridan, rode to the sounds of the guns and quickly reestablished order. Crook could never quite reconcile with his superior after Sheridan took charge of his command. To make matters worst, in February 1865 partisan rangers infiltrated through Crook's line and captured him while he slept. He spent several weeks in Richmond's Libby Prison prior to being paroled.

After the War he was appointed as Lieutenant Colonel in the regular army and given command of the 22nd Infantry and Fort Boise, Idaho. He did not waste any time in pacifying the Pavites of southern Idaho. His superiors were impressed with his aggressiveness and tenacity on the battlefield. He was soon transferred to the Southwest to solve the conflict with the Apaches. Crook used innovative methods in his war against the Apaches. He used Indians to catch Indians, and highly mobile mule pack trains to transport his supplies. With the mule pack train he was able to travel light and fast, having the same mobility as his enemy. With the innovation of these tactics, he could find and fix his enemy, wearing him down to surrender.

Bringing the Apaches under control brought Crook much praise from the army's leadership and Washington. He soon rose from Lieutenant Colonel to Brigadier General and



was given command of the Department of the Platte in 1875. Prior to his Campaign of 1876, he had the reputation among the top leadership of the army as being the foremost Indian fighter of his time.

### Endnotes

1. S.L.A Marshal Crimsoned Prairie, The Indian Wars (Da Capo Press, Inc. 1972), 7-9.

2. John S. Gray, Centennial Campaign, The Sioux War of 1876 (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, Copyright 1976 The Old Army Press), 4.

3. Marshal Crimsoned Prairie, 9.

"Any martial deed to which a brave laid claim, or the theft of stock from an enemy camp and other such bloodless hoodling, was called a coup, the French ward for "blow".

4. Robert M. Utley, Frontier Regulars, The United States Army and The Indian, 1866-1891 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc), 45.

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6. Russel F. Weigley, The American Way of War (Blomington: Indiana University Press), 157.

7. Stephen E. Ambrose, Crazy Horse and Custer, The Parallel Lives of Two American Warriors (Reprint. Originally published: Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1975), 130-133.

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## CHAPTER 2

### ROAD TO WAR

By the time the United States and the Great Sioux Nation met in conflict, the Sioux were quite well off. They had vast pony herds, a large population, an inexhaustible food supply, and were acquiring guns from traders. The Sioux were quite content with their way of life and their prominent status on the plains.

However, their nomadic way of life on the Plains was in direct conflict with westward expansion, and the opening of the frontier. In 1851, the Indian Bureau of the United States was empowered to seek out the tribes of the plains, and negotiate a treaty favorable for both sides. In that year the United States signed the first treaty at Fort Laramie, midway along the Oregon Trail, with the Chiefs of the Sioux, Northern Cheyenne, Arapaho and Crow Tribes. The tribes agreed to pull away from the Oregon Trail and stay within the Dakotas, Montana and Eastern Colorado, which was some of the finest game country in the world. In exchange, the United States would keep out white settlers and pay the Indians annuities for these concessions.

In 1854 the Sioux were gathering outside of Fort Laramie to collect the promised annuities from the

government. A westward bound Mormon immigrant abandoned a lame cow a few miles from the fort. A young Brule Sioux youth with two companions found the abandoned cow and decided to have a feast. When the Mormon got the word that an Indian had made a meal of his lame cow, he immediately demanded justice and compensation.

The young Brule Sioux took shelter in a Teton Sioux camp under the leadership of Chief Bear That Scatters. The Chief sought out the Mormon and offered ten dollars to compensate for the loss. The Mormon refused to settle for less than twenty-five dollars. The Chief refused on the grounds the abandoned lame cow was not worth more than ten dollars. The Mormon went to Lieutenant J. L. Grattan from Fort Laramie to resolve the problem.

An intoxicated Grattan took thirty men and two cannons to discuss the problem with Chief Bear That Scatters. Grattan demanded that the Sioux pay the Mormon the twenty-five dollars. The Chief protested the injustice and the warriors that were gathering around were becoming incited. Grattan panicked and opened fire with the cannon killing several Sioux and mortally wounding the Chief. Instead of backing down, the Teton Sioux attacked and massacred the small detachment. One survivor made it back to the fort to tell the tale. All the Sioux in the vicinity immediately broke camp and moved northeast in fear of reprisals.<sup>1</sup>

The army bided its time, and took action the following summer. Colonel William Harney and a thirteen hundred man expedition marched west from Fort Leavenworth to punish the Indians. Harney came across a Sioux camp located around Ash Hollow, not far from the North Platte River. The village, under Chief Little Thunder, was unprepared for an attack. He and his people had nothing to do with the Mormon's cow or the massacre the year before. Nevertheless, Harney had his own idea of justice and was going to teach these savages a lesson. He attacked from both ends of the village with artillery support. When the massacre was over, more than eighty of the tribe were dead and women and children were taken prisoner.

While this was going on, three Teton Sioux braves, from Chief Bear-That-Scatters tribe, went on a raid of vengeance for the loss of their chief the year before. They managed to kill three innocent whites before Harney demanded that five Sioux be turned over to the army for murder or suffer the wrath of his expedition. The chiefs sent five warriors, only of which three were guilty of the actual crime. They came in singing their death chant, expecting to die. Harney brought them back to Fort Leavenworth to hang, but a Presidential pardon was given to the Indians to pacify the situation.

The damage was already done. Great mistrust from both sides exacerbated the conflicts in culture. Once there

was mutual respect, trading, and fraternization between the cultures. Now, as a result of this incident, the Sioux avoided any contact with the white society.<sup>2</sup>

Just prior to the Civil War, four-fifths of the army was stationed west of the Missouri, guarding the frontier.<sup>3</sup> As the War between the States broke out, the resources were shifted back east. Most of the Plains Indians enjoyed relative non-interference from the United States during the Civil War.

One exception was the Santee Sioux from Minnesota under Chief Little Crow. This tribe was one of the few Plain's tribes that was making a transition from the hunter warrior culture to an agrarian culture. The tribe became dependent on their annuities, sent their children to school and many were attending church.

Twenty young braves from the tribe were on there way home from an unsuccessful hunting trip, when they came across some eggs along the side of the road, laid by chickens belonging to a local farmer. There was discussion as to the fear of white reprisal if the eggs were stolen. The braves teased each other about being afraid of the white man, when a few young braves decided to test their courage and raid the farmer and his family. They killed three whites in the raid and returned to the village to brag about their brave deed.

The chiefs immediately recognized the danger and held a council on what to do. Little Crow was reluctant to go to war and stated: "The white men are like locust. They fly so thick that the whole sky is like a snowstorm. We are only the herds of buffalo left scattered."<sup>4</sup> Fear of retribution pushed the tribe to vote for war. They knew from past experience that the white man's punishment would be swift and harsh. Little Crow agreed to lead them into war. They raided nearby settlements, killing twenty-three men and capturing ten women. They continued on their killing rampage, gang-raping women and slaughtering children.<sup>5</sup> At the end of the first day the white death toll was in the hundreds.

Some survivors made it back to Fort Ridgely to report the situation. The commander immediately sent out a detachment of forty-six troopers to secure the ferry line that the settlers were using to make their escape to the fort. As the detachment reached the location of the ferry, it was ambushed and suffered over fifty percent casualties. The Santee tribe suffered one dead on the first day. The Santee then laid siege to the fort with eight hundred warriors for the next three days. After losing close to one hundred warriors, Little Crow decided to withdraw and hit an easier target. He launched a new attack against the New Ulm settlement with a total population of nine hundred. The fighting was fierce. It went house to house and hand to

hand. The settlers checked the attack and Little Crow's warriors retired from the battle.<sup>6</sup>

The Minnesota government immediately began to raise a militia force to fight the Santee. Henry Sibley, a fur trader and former governor, was given a colonelcy and command of the militia force. As the government was raising the militia, the Santee continued their raids. It was now a full scale Indian war while the majority of regular troops were in the east fighting the Confederacy. Sibley raised a sixteen hundred man force and on the September 22, 1862 met the majority of Little Crow's warriors in battle. It did not take the militia long to scatter Little Crow's smaller force. Sibley pursued every Santee with a vengeance. He captured over two thousand Sioux, of which over three-fourths were not at war. He tried and sentenced over three hundred braves to hang. The trials averaged less than ten minutes each. They were convicted of rape and murder. Some were hanged just for engaging in battle.

Word reached President Lincoln and he intervened on behalf of the Indians. He declared that the Santee were at a state of war, and were given combatant status, which prevented the State of Minnesota from hanging Indians just for engaging in battle.<sup>7</sup> In the end, only thirty-six had been actually hanged for statutory crimes against the state of Minnesota.



At the conclusion of this war, the Sioux were banished from Minnesota, the reservation abolished, and all the hostiles transferred to Nebraska. Some friendly Santee Sioux who assisted their white friends, hiding them during raids, were allowed to stay, but they would soon lose their cultural identity.

The Sioux avoided contact with the United States for the rest of the Civil War, enjoying relative peace for several years. At the end of the war the United States began expanding westward again. New trails and railroads were being built through Indian lands to allow settlers to pass through to lands in Oregon and California.

In June 1866 a presidential commission arrived at Fort Laramie to win consent of the Sioux to use the newly cut Bozeman trail that accessed the gold fields of Montana. As the commission was negotiating with the chiefs of the Sioux Nation, the army was out constructing three forts along the trail. Fort C. F. Smith, Fort Philip Kearny, and Fort Reno were being established and garrisoned by the army in the middle of Sioux country before the Sioux had a chance to give their consent. The Sioux chiefs took it as bad faith that the whites would build forts and place armed forces in the heart of Sioux land prior to negotiations to seek permission to do the same. Red Cloud, the chief of the Oglala tribe, broke off the negotiations and vowed to make the trail run red with blood until the forts were removed.

The forts came under minor attacks. At Fort Kearny, the Sioux harassed supply wagons and wood gathering parties. Colonel Henry B. Carrington established a quick reaction force, ready to assist these parties when they got caught out of support range from the fort. On December 21, 1866, Captain William Fetterman was given the mission to rescue one of the wood gathering parties that was pinned down by a small Sioux force. Fetterman, seventy-eight soldiers and two civilians rode out to drive the Indians away, in order for the wood cutting party to make their escape. Fetterman was under strict orders to rescue the wood train and return. He was not to become decisively engaged once the wood train made their escape. Fetterman chose to end the harassment from the Sioux. He decided to disobey orders, and pursue this small band of warriors, who were led by a young warrior named Crazy Horse. Crazy Horse played his part well and led Fetterman down a ridge, where the terrain closed in, giving ground at Fetterman's advance. Fetterman pursued in earnest, thinking he had the Sioux on the run. He led his men into an ambush where Red Cloud and the majority of the Oglala warriors were waiting in ambush. Fetterman's command was massacred and mutilated to the last man. All eighty-one perished at the hands of Red Cloud and his warriors.<sup>8</sup>

The army's response was summed up by a message from General Sherman, commanding the Division of the Missouri to

General Philip ST. George, commanding the Department of the Missouri. The message stated: "Of course, this massacre should be treated as an act of war and should be punished with vindictive earnestness, until at least ten Indians are killed for each white life lost."<sup>9</sup> However, the Johnson administration bowed to the peace lobby and was seeking a peaceful solution to the situation on the Bozeman Trail. Congress empowered President Johnson to appoint an investigating committee.

In June 1867 they reported the obvious, that the cause of hostility was the forts along the Bozeman Trail that crossed the Sioux's territory. They further recognized that the government was wrong, and that military occupation of Sioux lands was a hostile act that should be remedied. They went on to recommend that hostilities cease and the United States seek a treaty with the Sioux to reconcile each party's differences.

General Winfield S. Hancock was sent out with the 7th Cavalry to find and treat with the Sioux. A reconcilory hand stretched out with a swift sword in the other. The expedition could not figure out why the Sioux would fade away every time they tried to make contact. The Sioux were learning their lessons well from the government. Even if they found a well meaning honest man, his promises would only last till the next replacement.

On July 20, 1867, Congress authorized the Johnson administration to appoint a peace commission to treat with the Sioux. They were to negotiate with all the major tribes of the Plains and remove the cause of the complaints against the government, secure the peace and safety for the white population in the settlements and along the trails and rail roads. Their secondary mission was to institute plans to civilize the Plains Indians in western European culture.

The peace commission concluded that the only alternative to extermination of the Plains Indian was to confine the southern tribes to a large reservation south of Kansas and the northern tribes to the north of Nebraska. The Government would support the Indians while they were converting back to an agrarian society. The peace commission negotiated an ambiguous treaty that guaranteed the wishes of the Sioux but contained clauses to be used in favor of government when it was advantageous. Article 16 states:

Country north of the North Platte River and east of the summits of the Big Horn Mountains shall be held and considered unceded Indian territory and...no white person shall be permitted to settle upon or occupy any portion of the same; or without the consent of the Indians first had and obtained, to pass through the same;... the military posts now established in the territory of this article named, shall be abandoned, and... the road... to...Montana... shall be closed.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time Article 11 states: "will not in future object to the construction of railroads, wagon-roads,

mail-stations, or other works of utility or necessity, which may be ordered or permitted by the laws of the United States."<sup>11</sup> This was a treaty that sounded great to the Sioux, who did not have the advantage of legal council, but at the same time guaranteed the right of the United States Government to change it at the will of the Congress of the United States. The army was still pushing for a confrontation to defeat the Sioux in battle.

On June 29, 1869, four months after President Grant took office, Sherman ordered Sheridan to issue a general order restoring the treaty to its original form prior to the signing by the peace commission, nullifying all the concessions won by the Sioux. The general order stated: "All Indians, when on their proper reservations, are under the exclusive control and jurisdiction of their agents.... Outside the well-defined limits of their reservations they are under the original and exclusive jurisdiction of military authority, and as a rule will be considered hostile."<sup>12</sup> The result of this general order was the immediate transfer of unceded territory back to white control.

The government was sitting on a powder keg, with half the population pushing for fair treatment of the Indians and the other half pushing for exploitation of all lands deemed valuable to settlers at the expense of the Indian.

It is inconceivable that the government could expect the Plains Indian to disregard their proud culture and accept a subservient role in white society without a fight. No one in the peace lobby, government or the army took the time to know or understand the Plains Indian way of life. They generalized he was a savage and needed to be civilized. At the very least the army should have attempted to understand the culture and the Indian way of war, if they expected to meet them in battle in the future.

On April 10, 1869, Congress strengthened the peace policy initiated by the Johnson administration. They regulated the Indian bureau to guard against fraud and attempted to ensure fair treatment of the Plain's Indian. However, Sheridan's order on the June 25, 1869 nullified the congressional peace policy. All Indians not on the reservation proper were under the army's control and were assumed hostile.

During the summer of 1871 the government sponsored trespass in the unceded territory on behalf of the Northern Pacific Railroad. The army escorted survey parties into the prime hunting grounds of the Sioux to look for possible routes that would cut right through the middle of Sioux country. In the summer of 1872, Sitting Bull organized resistance, harassed and attacked the surveyors. The government then decided to locate Sitting Bull and negotiate rights of passage through the Sioux lands. Sitting Bull

refused to negotiate with the white man. He sent his brother in-law with the following guidance: "Whenever he found a white man who would tell the truth, to return and he would go see him." Sitting Bull never recognized that there was such a thing as an honest white man and continued to refuse access.

In the summer of 1873, General David S. Stanley led surveyors to the unceded territory escorted by Custer and his 7th Cavalry. Custer fought two engagements on the Yellowstone, one on the 4th of August and the other on the 11th.<sup>13</sup> Sheridan lobbied to establish a fort in the Black Hills to support the national interest in the region. In the fall of 1873, Grant gave permission for the army to establish a fort.

On June 8, 1874, Sheridan ordered General Alfred H. Terry, commanding the Department of the Dakota, to organize a reconnaissance of the Black Hills "to obtain the most information in regard to the character of the country and possible routes of communication through it."<sup>14</sup> Custer led the survey party, unofficially accompanied by two speculating gold miners. Upon their return, the national newspapers announced "Gold in the Black Hills."<sup>15</sup> A massive gold rush in the heart of Sioux territory began before the summer's end. The Sioux watched the violation of their land from a distance. Initially, the army tried to prevent trespassing into what was clearly Sioux territory. On

April 7, 1875, the army turned back most of the prospectors, but it was not resourced to completely cut off the infiltration by the would-be prospectors into the Black Hills.

Grant knew he could not sustain the protection of the Indian lands by the onslaught of prospectors. He sent for a Sioux delegation to come to Washington to discuss the sale of hunting lands, along the Republican River. While the delegation was in Washington, Grant addressed them personally. He pointed out that they received their rations through the generosity of the government because the promised four years of free rations had expired several years ago. He continued to explain that the whites outnumbered the Sioux two hundred to one, and he could no longer effectively keep out the massive white population entering the Black Hills. He suggested the best solution would be to negotiate the transfer of the Black Hills to the government.<sup>16</sup> The Sioux Chiefs refused to discuss the Black Hills issue. However, they did concede to sell their hunting rights to area along the Republican River for twenty-five thousand dollars and agreed to discuss the transfer of the Black Hills with their people.

On May 25, 1875, Professor Walter P. Jeney headed a staff of scientists who were escorted by cavalry troops to confirm the report of the gold find. They soon were joined by hundreds of prospectors. As they departed the Black



Hills three months later, they announced that the land was too valuable to leave in the hands of the Sioux.

Grant's dilemma was that he would be crucified by the voters if he enforced the treaty rights in favor of the Sioux; and would be damned by the Indian board, the courts, and the peace lobby if he did not support the treaty. His solution took form during the summer and fall of 1875.

Grant had Mr. E. P. Smith, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, organize a commission to treat with the Sioux in June of 1875. By September 20th, Senator William B. Allison, President of the Commission, General Terry, and twelve others met at Fort Robinson to treat with the Sioux on the future of the Black Hills. Twenty thousand Sioux and Cheyenne were present, representing forty to forty-five thousand of the Sioux nation. The commission made another plea for the Sioux to reconsider the sale of the Black Hills. As Red Cloud was about to speak in favor of the sale, Little Big Man, a well respected warrior armed with pistols spoke up and said, "I will kill the first Indian chief who speaks favorably to the selling of the Black Hills."<sup>17</sup> The Sioux drew the line and refused any further concessions to the government. Political pressure continued to mount through the summer and fall.

On November 2, 1875, Grant met with Sheridan and Crook to discuss possible solutions to the problem in the Black Hills. They formed a two phased national strategy.

First, to appease the courts and the peace lobby, they refused to lift the ban for white settlers to enter the unceded territory. However, they chose not to enforce it, which would allow mass violations of the treaty. They figured that if the Sioux did nothing, they would essentially be giving up their right to the Black Hills, and if they chose to fight, that would give the government provocation to declare war. Sheridan confirmed phase one in a confidential message to Terry. The message stated:

At a meeting...in Washington of the 3rd of November...the President decided that the orders heretofore issued forbidding the occupation of the Black Hills country by miners should not be rescinded, still no fixed resistance should be made to the miners's going in, it being his belief that such resistance only increased their desire and complicated the troubles. Will you therefore quietly cause the troops in your Department to assume such attitude as will meet the views of the President in this respect.<sup>18</sup>

The second phase was to separate, in the minds of the people, that there were friendly Indians that lived on the reservation proper and there were hostiles that roamed the unceded territory. Grant started a propaganda campaign targeted at the American people, proclaiming that these hostiles needed to be brought under control and returned to the reservation proper. Strong evidence pointed to the second phase when William E. Curtis, of the Chicago Inter-Ocean, and the primary correspondent who accompanied Custer on his Black Hills Expedition sent the following dispatch: "The roving tribes and those who are known as wild Indians

will probably be given over entirely to the military until they are subdued enough to remain on their reservations and adopt civilized modes of life."<sup>19</sup> Bourke also recorded the following statement in his diary: "General Crook said that at the council where General Grant had decided that the Northern Sioux [i.e., roving bands] should go upon their reservation or be whipped, there were present Secretary Chandler, Assistant Secretary Cowen, Commissioner Smith, and Secretary Belknap."<sup>20</sup>

Secretary of the Interior, Zachariah Chandler sent the following letter to Secretary of War, William W. Belknap:

Referring to my letter of transmittal of the 29th ult.... requesting [Sic!] that steps be taken to compel the hostile Sioux to go upon a reservation and cease their depredations, I have the honor to inform you that I have this day directed the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to notify said Indians that they must Remove to a reservation before the 31st of January next; that if they neglect or refuse so to move, they will be reported to the War Department as hostile Indians and that a military force will be sent to compel them to obey the orders of the Indian Office. You will be notified of the compliance or non-compliance of the Indians with this order; and if said Indians shall neglect or refuse to comply with said order, I have the honor to request that the proper military officer be directed to compel their removal to and residence within the bounds of their reservation.<sup>21</sup>

On December 6, 1876, Smith directed his Indian agents on Spotted Tail, Red Cloud, Cheyenne River, Fort Peck, Lower Brule, Crow Creek, and Devil's Lake agencies to send word to the hostiles that the roamers will surrender to

the agencies no later than January 31, 1876, or be subject to military action. It is questionable if this was enough time to locate, inform and move the Sioux bands back to the agencies, assuming they wanted to return. This tends to support the notion that the Grant administration with the support of the army conspired a plan for war, putting the blame on the Sioux for not complying with the government's orders.

On January 31, 1876, the deadline had come without any response from the Sioux; completing the road to war. Grant's national strategy was coming together. Now it was time to implement Sheridan's operational strategy to "soundly whip the hostiles."

#### Sheridan's Operational Strategy

On November 9, 1875, E.C. Watkins forwarded his report through the Secretary of the Interior, to the Secretary of the Army, with estimates of "wild and anti-agency" Indians living off the reservations, in the unceded territory. Watkins reported the attitudes and strength dispositions to the army and estimated that there was approximately three thousand hostiles in the Unceded Indian Territory. He was looking at primarily two main camps. Sitting Bull's camp was estimated at thirty to forty lodges, with the ability to field seventy warriors. Crazy Horse's camp was estimated at one hundred and twenty lodges, with the ability to field two hundred warriors. In his report,

he recommended the following: "advise troops be sent against these hostile Indians, that winter; the sooner the better, and advise that the force consists of one thousand men."<sup>22</sup> The Secretary of the Interior and President Grant decided to give the "hostiles" a chance to surrender themselves to the agencies at the reservations or face punishment at the hands of the army.

Grant, Sheridan, and Crook had already discussed the possibility of military action against the "hostiles" on November 2nd. Sheridan received official notification on December 13, 1875, that military action would begin after the January 31, 1876, deadline if the "hostiles" had not returned to the reservation. He immediately sent messages to Crook and Terry with the following guidance:

I requested that, should operations be determined upon, directions to that effect be communicated as speedily as possible, so that the enemy might be taken at the greatest disadvantage; in other words, in mid winter, when they could not well get out of the way of the troops.<sup>23</sup>

In December, Terry sent a message to Sheridan, reporting that Sitting Bull's band was believed to be encamped near the mouth of the Little Missouri, and his command "...could reach it by quick movement, which might be decisive at that season of the year and he had sufficient troops to make such a movement."<sup>24</sup> Crook sent word that he was ready to go on the offensive as soon as the word was given.

On February 7, 1876, Sheridan received orders by indorsement of the General of the Army, to commence operations against the hostiles. On the 8th, Sheridan referred the order to Terry and Crook. Further, they were informed that the operations that both would make were independent of each other, each operating on their own. Sheridan suspended the boundaries between the Department of the Platte and the Dakota for the duration of hostilities. He chose not to draw new ones and had three separate commands, operating independently of each other, in the same sand box. Sheridan did tell them he would keep them appraised of the situation as reports came in from both commands.<sup>25</sup>

Terry's intelligence now reported that Sitting Bull's band was on the Dry Fork of the Missouri, over two hundred miles farther west than he was originally reported. He was concentrating the 7th Cavalry at Fort Abraham Lincoln, when the weather turned for the worst. Many of the troopers who were making their way to the fort, were badly frost-bitten. The snow was so deep that Terry sent word back to Sheridan that advised that the expedition be postponed until later in the season. Sheridan, supported the judgement of the commander on the ground, but was not happy with the situation.

At the same time, Crook massed ten companies of cavalry and two companies of infantry at Fort Fetterman and

was on the move by the 1st of March. Crook's intelligence indicated that Crazy Horse's village was either at the headwaters of the Powder River, Tongue River, or the Rosebud. On the 16th, Frank Gruard, the primary Guide for Crook's command, spotted a pony belonging to Crazy Horse moving toward a Sioux camp on the Powder River. Before Frank Gruard went to work for the army, he had lived for a number of years with the Sioux and knew, and feared Crazy Horse.

Crook immediately ordered Colonel J. J. Reynolds, with six cavalry companies, a total of fifteen officers and 359 enlisted men to attack the village. Reynolds was to attack, inflicting as much damage as possible, capture the pony herd, meat reserves, and any other provisions that could be used to sustain the force for extended operations. Crook was going to take the remainder of the command to Clear Creek and meet Reynolds there after the attack on the evening of the 17th.

Reynolds moved out the evening of March 16th. They marched most of the night through severe weather and zero percent illumination. The horses and men were near exhaustion when they finally neared the camp. Before dawn Reynolds reached the bluffs to the west of the camp, located on the Powder River.

The camp was mostly Cheyenne with a few Sioux under the leadership of Crazy Horse's good friend He Dog. He was

a great warrior by his own right, and had heard of the impending friction between the Indians in the unceded territory and the army. He had grown tired of war and had many women and children to look out for, and was on his way back to the reservation. Since he was complying with the order, he and his people felt they were safe from attack, as they made their way back to the reservation.

Reynolds made final plans on the bluff, prior to dawn. Lieutenant John G. Bourke, Aide de Camp to Crook, accompanied Reynolds, and recorded the following:

Reynolds had three battalions, commanded respectively by Moore, Mills, and Noyes. Noyes's battalion was to make the first move, Egan's company, with its revolvers, charging in upon the village, and Noyes cutting out and driving off the enemy's herd of ponies. Mill was to move in rear of Noyes, and, after the village had been charged, move into and take possession of it, occupy the plum thicket surrounding it, and destroy all the "tepis" and plunder of all kinds. These battalions were to descend into the valley of the Powder through a ravine on our right flank, while Moore with his two companies was to move to the left and take up a position upon the hills overlooking the village, and receive the flying Indians with a shower of lead when they started to flee from their lodges, and attempted to get positions in the brakes or bluffs to annoy Egan.<sup>26</sup>

The attack was planned for 0730, but due to fatigue of the animals and men, the rugged terrain, and severe weather conditions it was 0900 before the attack began. Initially the attack was very successful. Captain Egan, 2nd Cavalry, supported by Mills, routed the village of two hundred warriors, and a total population of seven hundred.



Captain Alexander Moore's battalion was supposed to be in position to the north of camp to block any Indians from making their escape. Moore failed to be in a position to successfully complete his mission and most of the Indians made their escape.

When Reynolds entered the village he found over one hundred lodges, tons of dried buffalo meat, other food stores, and vast quantities of ammunition. Instead of capturing all the stores he could carry, he decided to disobey Crook's order and burn the food stores. Later, at his subsequent court martial he stated:

I presumed as a matter of course that there must be considerable property in a village of this size, but as it was wholly impractical for me to transport it I determined to destroy everything that we could lay our hands on and then resume the march up the river to meet the other portion of the command at the mouth of Lodgepole [Clear Creek] according to agreement.<sup>27</sup>

At 1100 Reynolds torched the village. As the warriors stood naked in the snow watching their village with all their possessions go up in smoke, their courage grew. They massed along the bluffs to the west, and put suppressive fire into cavalry positions around the village. Moore's battalion broke, and fell back one hundred and fifty yards. As Moore fell back he left Mills' flank exposed, and the two battalions holding the village came under increased attack.

Mills requested assistance to close up his flank. Instead of reinforcing Mills, Reynolds ordered a withdrawal. Noyes was ordered from the rear to support the withdrawal, but he had unsaddled his mounts and was resting his men and horses when the order came. It took him an hour to respond. Reynolds withdrew his command in disarray, leaving his dead and seriously wounded behind. He moved to his appointed rendezvous point and camped, waiting for Crook to link-up. The warriors from the village pursued and infiltrated the camp on the morning of the 18th, and made off with most of the pony herd.

His subordinate officers advised their commander to give chase. Reynolds's response was: "I deemed it inadvisable, in condition of our horses to attempt a long and doubtful chase after the ponies."<sup>28</sup> When Crook linked-up with Reynolds later that day and found out that his subordinate commander had allowed victory to slip through his fingers, and disobeyed orders while doing so, he became furious.

When the command returned to Fort Fetterman on March 26, 1876, Crook immediately recommended Reynolds for court martial. Bourke summed up what Reynolds's subordinates thought after this latest failure: "exhibition of incompetency was the last link needed to fasten the chain of popular obloquy to the reputation of our Commanding Officer."<sup>29</sup>

The failure at Powder River ended any hope of a quick victory. Crook's forces dispersed back to their small forts, so they could sustain themselves through the rest of winter. The action at Powder River had successfully checked the army's only hope of a quick victory. Crook now returned to his headquarters in Omaha, and began planning his summer campaign.

### Summer Campaign

The summer campaign, like the Winter Campaign consisted of three separate and independent actions. The three commanders were to work their way toward the center of the unceded territory, looking for the "hostiles." Terry concentrated at Fort Lincoln, the Seventh Cavalry, three Gatling guns, and six companies of infantry. On May 17th, he moved toward the mouth of the Powder River. Here he set up his base camp on June 7th, and sent out smaller elements to scout up the forks of the Powder River, cross country to the Rosebud, and down the Rosebud to its mouth.

Colonel John Gibbon's command, consisting of four companies of the Second Cavalry and six companies of the Seventh Infantry, was to march eastward along the north bank of the Yellowstone from Fort Ellis, in Montana, to the mouth of the Rosebud.

Crook concentrated at Fort Fetterman with fifteen companies of cavalry and five companies of infantry. They moved on the 29th of May and arrived at their base camp at

Goose Creek on May 11th and set out for the Rosebud Creek on May 16th.

All three commands were converging toward the center of the territory. Neither command had direct communications with the other, and had to send messages back to Chicago, Illinois, where Sheridan's headquarters was. To communicate with another command, it took an average of eight days to get a message to Sheridan, and another eight days for Sheridan to respond due to the immature lines of communications. The three columns were all on a classic search and destroy mission. Sheridan and his subordinate commanders all felt that each column was more than enough to round the hostiles up and drive them back the reservation. This was the setting as Crook consolidated, and organized the Big Horn and Yellow Stone expedition, that began the summer campaign from Fort Fetterman on May 29, 1876.

### Endnotes

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## CHAPTER 3

### MOVING

The failure of Colonel Reynolds at the Battle of Powder River changed the Centennial Campaign from a police action against a few small bands of Sioux and Cheyenne in the unseeded territory, to an all out war against a united Sioux and Cheyenne nations. Prior to this battle, the Sioux and Cheyenne avoided direct confrontation with the U.S. Army. They would not become decisively engaged unless the advantage was overwhelmingly in the Indians favor. After He-Dog's counter-attack against Reynolds, Crook realized a small force could no longer accomplish the mission.

After the defeat at Powder River, Crook began consolidating his forces at three posts: Fort D. A Russell, near Cheyenne; Fort Laramie; and Fort Fetterman. He was not going to repeat the same mistake of having an inadequate force to confront Crazy Horse and his bold warriors. On May 2, 1876, Crook ordered every available company under the Department of the Platte to assemble at Fort Fetterman as soon as possible. On the 28th of May he issued General orders No. 1, establishing the Big Horn & Yellowstone Expedition under his direct command (See appendix A).<sup>1</sup>

On the same day, while on patrol, Captain James T. Egan, commander, Company K, 2d Cavalry, sent a scouting report by telegraph to BG Crook from Fort Laramie. He reported nearly one hundred lodges and six hundred Sioux, mostly warriors, moving northeast toward the Black Hills. All Egan could do with his small force was to drive the Sioux away from the wagon trains moving through his vicinity.

The Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition broke camp just below Fort Fetterman and marched north on the May 29th. The column stretched out more than a mile. Thick dust hung over nine hundred men and 103 wagons pulled by six-mule teams as it moved slowly forward toward Sioux Country (See fig. 1). The head of the column arrived at Sage Creek at 1730 hours, twelve miles from where it had started. Crook made camp here for the night.<sup>2</sup> This first day of movement was unusually slow and kept short due to the unfamiliarity of the adhoc expedition. The morning of the same day, Crook sent Captain Fredrick Van Vliet, Commander, Company C, 3d Cavalry, and 1st Lieutenant Emmet Crawford, Commander, Company G, 3d Cavalry, to Fort Reno with eight days of rations to link-up with the Crow Scouts who had promised to join the command near Fort Reno.<sup>3</sup> If Van Vliet was successful in bringing in the promised scouts it would add another regiment to Crook's growing force.



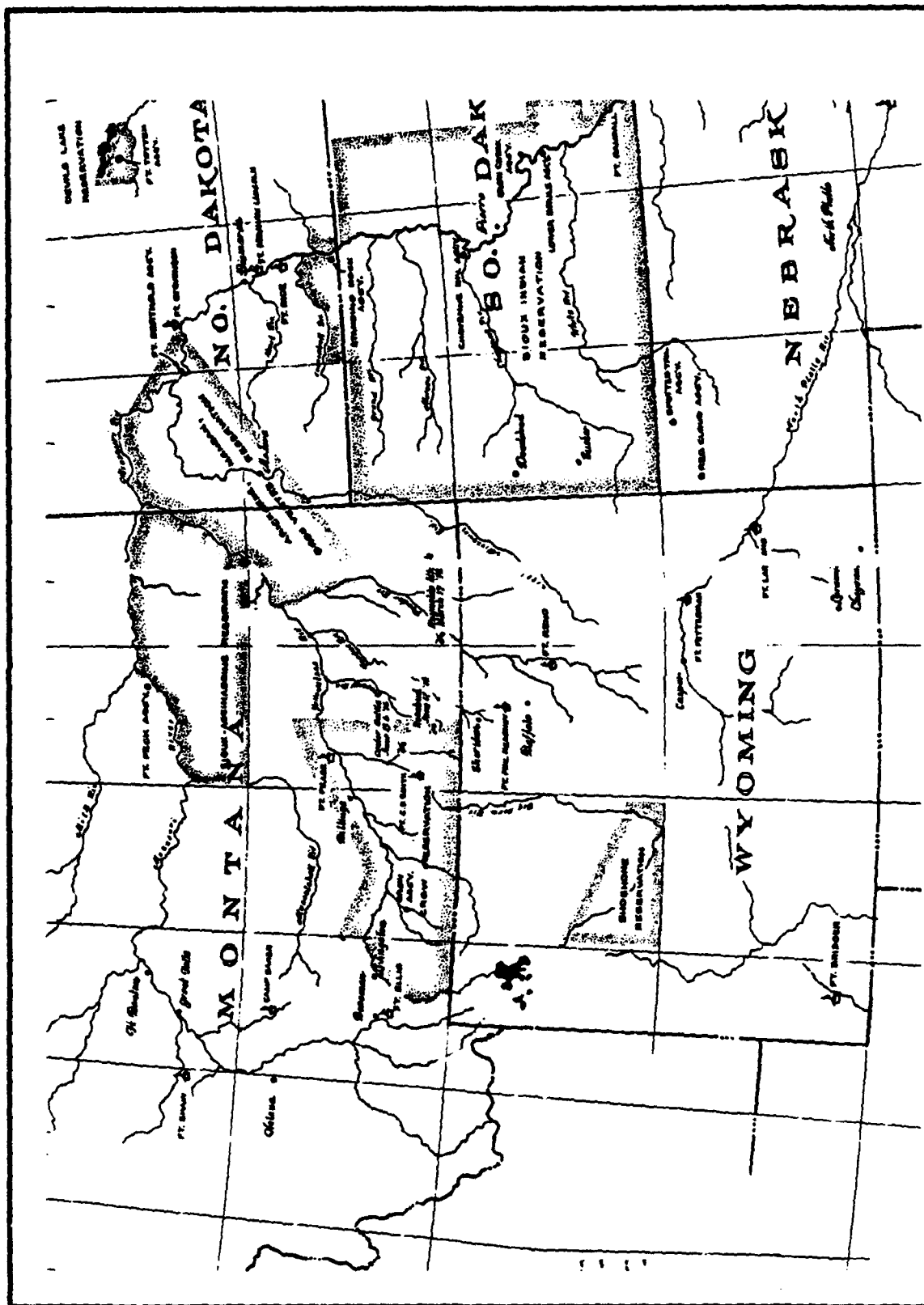


Fig. 1. Area of Operation

The expedition broke camp at 0640 the next morning and marched twenty miles to the South Cheyenne River where Crook set up camp around 1500 hours. Bourke's Diary described this site as a "shriveled Stream of Alkaline water standing in pools."<sup>4</sup> Crook sent two cavalry companies under the command of Captain Charles Meinhold with Frank Guard to scout a better trail and fording site across the Powder River than Reynolds had used in the winter campaign. Frank Guard later claimed that Crook's real intention was to locate the Shoshonee scouts that Crook was promised.<sup>5</sup> Crook built his reputation as a great Indian fighter using Indians to catch Indians. He realized the importance of linking-up with his promised Indian allies. Therefore, Frank Guard's account is the most likely reason he and Meinhold were sent out. The secretive nature of Crook was starting to show through at this point. He keeps his specific plans and intentions to himself and only shares them when required by the mission.

The infantry led the expedition out of camp at 0530 on the 31st. The beginning of the march went very slow. The wagons were having difficulty moving across muddy roads and had to make frequent stops. The expedition crossed several forks and the main channel of the Cheyenne river. The command marched twenty-one miles to Buffalo Wallows on the North Fork of Cheyenne where it bivouaced for the night. A messenger arrived from Meinhold with the news of an

accident. Dr. Albert Harsuff, assistant surgeon, took a wagon out to retrieve the wounded trooper, Private Tierny of Company B, 3d Cavalry who was brought into camp mortally wounded from an accidental discharge of his pistol. He carelessly threw it to the ground while chopping wood and it went off. The only thing the doctor could do was make him as comfortable as possible.<sup>6</sup> When troopers accidentally discharge their weapons, it shows a lack of training with firearms and discipline.

On the first day of June, as the command marched out of camp at 0530. It was cold, wet, and sleeting. It was supposed to be the first day of summer. The expedition marched twenty miles and made their camp at 1330. Meinhold, who had gone ahead to conduct a reconnaissance, returned at 1400, but he did not find any practical roads the expedition could use toward their march to Fort Reno or any signs of the Shoshonee Scouts. At this camp site, Crook's troops found a board with an inscription from a party of sixty-five Montana miners that later join the command, stating they had been there on the 27th. Van Vliet also passed the site on May 29th, the day the expedition left Fort Fetterman. Captain Andrew S. Burt, commander of Company H, Ninth Infantry was out hunting and came across a fresh trail indicating a small party of Indians had passed through this area also. The command never knew if the Indian sign was from friendly allies or an enemy hunting

party. The first day of summer was a cold, wet and miserable day for the command. Crook had not heard anything from his allies to date, but fresh Indian sign was found nearby.

The command marched out of camp at 0520 on June 2nd and moved seventeen miles to old Fort Reno where they made camp at Clear Creek. The command was getting closer to Sioux country with every mile marched. Indian sign and buffalo tracks were becoming more prevalent. There were mostly pony tracks and few lodge pole tracks, which indicated warriors leaving their reservations while their families stayed behind under the protection of the U.S. government. Signs of Sioux hunting and raiding parties were becoming more prevalent as they moved toward Fort Phil Kearny. The command took extra precautions, they increased pickets thrown out one or two miles to the front of the main body, kept a ready reaction platoon of calvary mounted, ready for instant action. Based on the reports from the miners and the enemy sign discovered by the members in the command, Crook implemented the proper precautions to protect the force during bivouac.

Van Vliet's command linked-up with the expedition empty handed at this camp site. Crook expected the Crow scouts to join here. When they did not show, he grew concerned.

The Black Hills region originally belonged to the Crow and the Shoshone. As the Sioux and Cheyenne were pushed into the Black Hills twenty years earlier, they took the Crow and Shoshone lands by force. Therefore, Crook thought the Crow and Shoshone would jump at the chance to reap revenge on the the Sioux and Cheyenne, their long time foe.

Frank Guard, however, had advised Crook that it might take a week or more to find, recruit, and return with the Crow allies. He suggested that the expedition march to the forks of Goose Creek (present day Sheridan, WY) and wait for the scouts to return from their mission. The Goose Creek location was an excellent choice for bivouac. It was just south of what the Sioux thought of their land. Goose Creek had plenty of fresh grass, water, and timber. The terrain was easily defensible and had easy access to all the valleys frequented by the Sioux. Furthermore the forks of Goose Creek was just one easy days march to the northwest from Fort Phil Kearny. Crook agreed to the plan and sent his only guides, Frank Guard, Louis Richaud, and Big Bat ahead to the Crow village. These guides, especially Guard, were the only members of the force that knew the territory well. Crook's decision to send all three guides at once completely blinded the command. He was taking a big gamble, risking the eyes and ears of his command. If the guides did

not return with or without the Crow scouts, Crook's chances of success were very slim.

The next morning the expedition broke camp at 0440, taking the road to old Fort Phil Kearny. The expedition was almost blind without its guides and proceeded on the memory of Crook who had traveled the area three months before with Reynolds. Summer had finally arrived. A cool frost on the ground kept the dust down. As the day grew the air warmed and the skies cleared. The command spotted several Indian signal fires and Crook sent companies out to reconnoiter the area. The reconnaissance elements found nothing. After marching around twenty-seven miles, the expedition bivouacked at Crazy Woman Creek. This was the site of several fierce battles between the U.S. Army and the Sioux a decade before. Due to the increased sign and past battles in the area, Crook ordered extra security in anticipation of possible Sioux raiding parties<sup>7</sup>

On June 4th, the Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition woke to clear skies and a balmy breeze. The expedition marched out of camp at 0520, marching approximately twenty-two miles to camp at Clear Fork Springs. Along the road toward Fort Phil Kearny, the column encountered shallow wash-outs that greatly slowed wagon movement. Captain W. S. Stanton, the engineer officer for the expedition organized engineering teams to fill in ruts and wash-out areas from the surrounding escapements. Bourke

described the march in detail in his diary and concluded: "The first wagon should be loaded with pioneer tools, axes, hatchets, pickets, spades, shovels, coils of rope, etc., ..." This of course is describing combat loading to enhance the mobility effort of the expedition. He goes on to describe the needs of the last wagon in the train: "The last wagon needs to carry extra poles, couplings, harness links, etc., ... most frequently used for repair."<sup>8</sup> Today we follow this technique of establishing mobility assets forward to enhance movement of the column and repair assets in the rear to police and fix broken vehicles.

Messengers from the party of Montana miners arrived at the command's bivouac. The miners were well prepared for possible attack, but to date had not seen anything but indian signs and buffalo tracks. Bourke describes the miners routine every time they set up their camp sites:

Miners dug rifle pits, put pickets out, surrounded themselves with rocks, palisades, or anything else that could be made to resist a charge from the Sioux, whose trails were becoming very thick and plenty. It always seemed to me that little party of Montana miners displayed more true grit, more common sense, and more intelligence in their desperate march through a scarcely known country filled with hostile Indians than almost any similar party which I can now recall; they were prepared for every emergency.....<sup>9</sup>

The officers of the Big Horn & Yellowstone Expedition were truly impressed with the miners field craft and military training. By the precautions they took to prevent ambush, the Montanna Miners showed themselves as a

force to be reckoned with in their own right. This impression most likely had an impact on the decision to let the miners join the command at a later date.

The expedition broke camp around 0500 on the 5th of June, marching approximately fifteen miles until they reached Fort Kearny around 1030. During the march everyone kept a sharp look out for any sign or movement of the enemy. Rattle snakes were coming out in abundance and several were killed along the trail and at the camp site. The troops set up their bivouac site along Big Piney Creek, just east of the old fort site and five miles to the south of the site where Captain William J. Fetterman led his command of three officers, seventy-five enlisted and three civilians to their deaths at the hands of Chief Red Cloud and his Sioux band 1866. Many of the officers and men went to visit the site. They found the cemetery vandalized and broken, but the wooden fence around it untouched.

During the day Crook and several officers went hunting for buffalo. It was rumored that a herd was near by, but none were found. The hunting party did not come back empty handed however, they brought back several elk and antelope back to camp. Crook demonstrated a lack of discipline and standards within the command. On one hand he would increase security and take precautions in certain situation. On the other hand he would allow himself and fellow officers to go on hunting expeditions that could



endanger a small party needlessly or at the very least compromise the command.

Lieutenant Colonel W. B. Royal, commander of the cavalry, and Major Chambers, commander of the infantry, were very cautious and posted pickets around the bivouac site. One of the picket parties in a little gulch stationed one man in a foot hold in a wall to keep watch where he had a clear view along the ground above. If he saw anything he was to give a tug on a rope that would awake the main party. This allowed the sentry to sound the alarm stealthily so the main picket party could give the wandering Indians a "bloody welcome".<sup>10</sup> These precautions strengthen the opinion that the expedition is a well trained force. However constant violations with hunting and fishing trips for sport show a lack of standards within the command.

Captain Henry E. Noyes, commander of the 2d Cavalry Regiment(-), and a party of ten men left camp prior to the main body on the 6th of June to scout a bivouac site at Goose Creek and stake claims to prime fishing holes. Crook led the main column out of camp at 0500 following Noyes' lead down Fetterman's Ridge and past the site of the Fetterman massacre. The weather turned foul, the temperature drop, and a heavy down pour soaked the column. This made it extremely difficult for the wagon trains to move through the rough terrain.

As Crook marched down Fetterman's Ridge, the trail disappeared in a grassy valley. He turned north too soon and followed Prairie Dog Creek instead of Little Goose Creek, taking the column in the wrong direction. After a gruelling seventeen miles, he established a bivouac site along Prairie Dog Creek.<sup>11</sup> Crook does not seem to discover his mistake at this point. It would seem he would recognize the trail that he and Reynolds had taken just a few months before. There was mass confusion among the officers, men and reporters to their actual location. None of them seemed sure where they were and Crook was not discussing the situation with anyone in the command.

To make matters worst, a cheyenne hunting party, led by Wooden Leg, stumbled on the bivouac site. Wooden Leg chose to track the expedition for another day before returning to the main Cheyenne camp that was located on the Rosebud.<sup>12</sup> Crook's new bivouac site was deep in Indian territory, harder to defend, poorly supplied, and most importantly, it was not the agreed link-up site with Frank Gruard and the Crow.

Furthermore, no one in the column knew the Cheyenne hunting party had found them. Crook was concerned about Noyes and the scouting party. Noyes, realizing that something must of gone wrong when the expedition was long over due at the designated bivouac site at Goose Creek, back tracked to locate the column. He easily picked up the trail

of the column that was comprised of over one hundred wagons and 900 men and several hundred mules and horses. The scouting party closed in on the Prairie Dog Creek bivouac site approximately 2200 hours on the evening of the 6th of June, but chose to camp outside the picket line until daylight to avoid unnecessary confrontations with the jittery picket.

Crook was glad to see his scouting party that entered camp at daylight on the morning of the 7 June and confirmed his location. The expedition then broke camp at and continued down Prairie Dog Creek to its junction with the Tongue River. Crook never explained why he chose to continue down Parrie Dog Creek instead of correcting his mistake on the morning of the 7th. Was it his ego of not admitting he was moving in the wrong direction or did he have a purpose for moving down to the junction of Parrie Dog Creek and the Tounge River? Either way he chose not to share the information with anyone in his command, not even his most trusted officers.

Rain during the early hours of the march once again made progress difficult. The animals and wagons had a rough time moving across the muddy broken ground that was cut up by deep ravines and gullies. Captain William H. Andrews, commander of Company I, 3d Cavalry, and his pioneers paved the way for the wagons by excavating the embankments along the trail. After a gruelling fourteen and a half miles,

Crook ordered the column into bivouac at 1400. He set his bivouac site on the Tongue River near the mouth of Prairie Dog Creek.<sup>13</sup> The camp quickly established a normal routine of activity. Crook plan was to remained at this site for the next few days or until his Gruard and the other guides returned with the Crow Scouts. Private Tierny, the trooper who accidentally shot himself died and was buried. Captain Guy V. Henry, commander of Company D, 3d Cavalry, read the eulogy with over 600 troopers present at the funeral.

While the expedition was settling into their new bivouac site, Crook went looking for rare birds eggs and later took LT Bourke to kill his first buffalo. The troopers of the expedition must of had a hard time taking the threat serious when the commander goes out on recreational excursions in enemy territory. This type of activity continued to be routine throughout the campaign.

Around midnight on the 7th, an unknown Indian scouting party approached the camp on the far side of the Tongue River and hailed the camp. Ben Arnold, a Courier, was sent out to contact and identify the Indian scouts. Arnold, groggy with sleep answered the Indians in the Sioux tongue. The Indians immediately broke contact and disappeared from the camp. Later, on June 14th, Crook confirmed his fear that Arnold had scared off the Crow scouting party sent in advance to link-up with the command. Thinking they had stumbled on a Sioux camp site the Crow

moved out of the area. Crook was angry at the news. He was still looking for his promised Crow scouts and rightfully thought that Arnold had blown the link-up. Noyes and a small hunting party were outside the bivouac site on the 8th when they discovered a stray Indian pony and a fresh trail of approximately fifteen warriors. The talk of the camp was that these were the same Indians that had approached the camp the previous evening. Crook still was not sure if the trail found was Sioux or Crow. Without Crook's guides, it was nearly impossible for the soldiers to tell Crow sign from Sioux Sign. Crook was starting to pay for his gamble.

The Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition continued to bivouac at the mouth of the Tongue River for the next few days. They cleaned themselves, washed clothes, and rested. In War-Path and Bivouac, John Finnerty describes the bivouac site:

Tongue River wound around the neck of land on which our tents were pitched, like a horse shoe. Prairie Dog Creek bounded us on the south; a low ridge rose to our left, and in front, beyond Tongue River and commanding it and our camp, there stood a bold, steep bluff. The bottom lands were well covered with timber. Some of the officers found fault with the position, on account of its rather exposed situation, but others treated the matter lightly and said there was nothing to be apprehended.<sup>14</sup>

On the 9th of June, Crook continued to show concerns and was growing impatient with the absence of his guides and the promised Crow allies. He received a telegraph later in the day from the Department of the

Missouri. Sheridan had ordered the Fifth Cavalry was up from Kansas to secure Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Reservations and secure Crook's rear area. The telegram also included a promise of 120 Shoshone warriors who were making their way to Crook's command and were supposed to arrive on the 8th or 9th of June. The bad news was that the telegraph wires were cut that connected the Crow Agency to the Department of the Missouri. Thus communications were not reliable. Crook's guides would have to get word to the Crows. During the day, the Sixty-five Black Hill miners attached themselves to the Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition for security in exchange for augmenting Crook's fighting force.<sup>15</sup> The miners added another well trained and highly disciplined company size element to the fighting force.

The camp was emersed in boredom by the 9th. Officers raced horses, the packers and teamsters had foot races, and soldiers played cards and tried to keep busy. While the expedition was moving the command stayed energized; but now that they had been in bivouac for several days, the command was getting complacent. Pickets were out on the high ground on the near side of the Tongue River, maintaining security. Shortly after Retreat that evening, the main camp came under heavy fire from the bluffs on the far side of the Tongue River. A Cheyenne raiding party hit the pickets on the hill tops. The enemy concentrated his

tents, aerating stoves, and tearing up the main camp site with flying lead. Immediately the packers and teamsters returned fire in the direction of the enemy fire, but it was uncontrolled and ineffective. Rounds impacting on the far bluffs did little to suppress the Cheyenne raiding party. Bourke best describes the skirmish in his diary: "The Indians did not wait for a moment, but moved up in good style, driving our pickets and taking position in the rocks, from which they rained down a severe fire which did no great damage but was extremely annoying while it lasted."<sup>16</sup>

Crook took quick action, he ordered Mills and companies A, E, I, and M to cross the Tongue and conduct a frontal assault up the bluffs and into the enemy. In good cavalry fashion, Mills led a mounted charge across the Tongue and dismounted to conduct the assault in good skirmish order. The infantry, under Captain Samuel Munson took Companies C, G, and H of the Ninth Infantry to reinforce the pickets on the southern bluffs and provide suppressive fire for the Cavalry attack. As the Cavalry reached the enemy position on the top of the bluffs, the Indians withdrew to the next series of ridges about a thousand yards away. Mills gave chase with the same results several times before realizing the Indians were playing cat and mouse. While over half the command was directly involved with the raiding party on the far side of the Tongue, a smaller party circled the camp and attempted to

steal the horses. Luckily for the expedition the horses had been brought into camp for grooming prior to the attack.

As quickly as they began the fight the Indians broke contact. The entire action lasted less than one hour. Losses were light: two men slightly wounded, one in the leg and the other in the arm; two horses and three mules had to be destroyed because of wounds; and several tents and one stove were severely damaged. Afterwards, the command was busy telling war stories and spreading wild estimates of the enemy strength. The estimates ranged from fifty to nine hundred warriors in the attack. In actuality, it was a small raiding party under Little Hawk, who responded to Wooden Legs intelligence report to Crazy Horse on the 7th. Crazy Horse uses Little Hawk from this point on to maintain contact with Crook's force and report back. Each time Crook makes a decisive move from this point on, he gets compromised.

The entire command responded to the attack with enthusiasm. They felt themselves victorious, driving the enemy from the field of battle. After ten days of hardships on the trail, with little sign of any Indians, they had finally made contact with their prey. The action boosted morale and gave all feeling that they could defeat any force that tried to attack them. The monotony of camp life came to an end. In his diary, Bourke described the renewed enthusiasm of the men and prayed for continued contact with



the enemy to help motivate and discipline the soldiers under fire. The small battle reinforced the Army's view on the Indian way of war. As long as the army had a large force, the Indians would not stand and fight.

Crazy Horse sent a clear message with the Cheyenne attack. He had left a warning with reservation Indians for the ears of the blue coats before the expedition left Fort Fetterman. Crazy Horse warned that the fighting would begin as soon as the soldiers crossed the Tongue River into Sioux land. With this attack, the battle lines were drawn and Crazy Horse had initiated the first action. Members in the command reported that some in the raiding party were wounded, but none were left behind for confirmation. The raiding party was never decisively. They kept the initiative, and fought on their terms throughout the skirmish. Sioux casualties were probably very light if any. Crazy Horse had definitetly sent a message that he meant buisiness in defending Sioux lands.

Crook kept the expedition in bivouac on June 10th while a scouting party was out to locate a camp site that afforded better protection and grazing for the animals. Fodder was becoming scarce and Crook was still concerned about his long overdue scouts. The men seemed to be more aware and cautious after the excitement on the 9th. The horse and mules were kept close for protection. The scouting party returned with a favorable report of a

possible bivouac site at the forks of Goose Creek, the original link-up site the Frank Gruard and Crook had previously agreed upon. Crook gave the movement order in the early evening of the 10th for execution at 0800 the next morning. The command was bustling with rumors of why they were moving prior to link-up. Many speculated that they were confusing the Sioux. Some thought they were headed deeper in to enemy territory. Crook kept silent and refused to shed any light on his future operational plans or overall campaign strategy.<sup>17</sup>

The Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition moved out at 0730 on the 11th. The column marched eleven miles back up Prairie Dog Creek and then broke a new trail for seven miles traveling Southwest. Rumors continued to run rampant among the officers over the reason for the move. Stanton officially wrote that the new camp was "the appointed place to wait" and provided strategic access to all the valleys in the Indian country. Some speculated they were moving further into Indian country in defiance of Crazy Horse. Lieutenant J. E. H. Foster, Company I, 3d Cavalry expressed some of the officers' frustration on not being informed of the plan. He stated: "BG Crook has a faculty for silence that is absolutely astonishing. There is one thing very certain: none of the General's plans will ever be discussed until after they are executed - a precious quality in a commanding officer. Grant is loquacious when compared to

him."<sup>18</sup> Even Bourke could not get a straight answer from Crook. R. E. Strahorn, reporter for the New York Times probably captured it best. He said: "The expedition, having marched to the Tongue River, has marched back again to Goose Creek, where it was originally Crook's intention to establish a depot of supplies after leaving Fort Phil Kearny. Through somebody's blundering, the trail was missed."<sup>19</sup>

Why Crook would not share his plans with his subordinate commanders is unknown to this day. We can speculate if Crook had to react to an unknown situation or take a wrong turn down Parrie Dog Creek, he could always say it was all part of the plan. This strategy is never effective, in the end you can never fool the lowest ranking trooper, much less Crook's experienced subordinate commanders. By the comments within the officer ranks, Crook's tight lipped behavior was frustrating if not eroding morale of his commanders.

At 1500, the expedition arrived at the forks of Goose Creek, their original link-up point with Frank Guard and the Crows.<sup>20</sup> Crook's guides had been gone for eight days now. He was becoming increasingly concerned about their location and safety. Supplies were dwindling and time running out for a large expedition without major resupply. Nevertheless the new camp site provided everything Frank Guard had promised on the second of June, when he and Crook

agreed on this site. Goose Creek was an excellent choice for the command to bivouac. There was plenty of grass that was secured by slopes, wood for fires, and clear sweet drinking water. Many of the officers and men formed hunting & fishing parties. These parties provided fresh venison, antelope, bear, and trout to an otherwise bland menu. Burt took some officers and a small party of miners and prospected for gold in the surrounding hills for a few days. Boredom started to return to the command. Bourke talks about the difficulty of killing time, "drilling and guard duty occupy very few minutes, reading and writing become irksome and conversation narrowly escapes the imputation of rank stupidity."<sup>21</sup> However, the incident on the 9th was still fresh in Crook's mind. He increased his picket lines and kept his herds close to the base camp while the command awaited word from the long overdue guides or link-up with the Shoshone was complete.

Finally on the afternoon of the 14th, Frank Guard and Louis Richaud returned with one old Indian chief by the name of Old Crow. Guard immediately went to debrief Crook on his exploits over the past thirteen days. The following is a brief synopsis of Guard's report. When the guides finally located the Crow village, the Crows did not want to go on the warpath with the soldiers. There were people in the village starving and the young warriors were needed to hunt the big buffalo heard that was in the vicinity. Guard

knew he could not return empty handed, so he and his guides chose to stay and try to convince as many warriors as possible to join them. Gruard quickly won over Old Crow, an old, but highly respected war chief. Between the guides and Old Crow they spent the next several days recruiting warriors. They shamed many warriors into joining them to fight their dreaded enemy, the Sioux. War was a way of life with the Plains Indians. It was a matter of honor to fight and was the final step to becoming a man. Old Crow called a council with his village and said:

The great white chief will hear his Indian brother. These are our lands by inheritance. The Great Spirit gave them to our fathers, but the Sioux stole them from us. They hunt upon our mountains. They fish in our streams. They have stolen our horses. They have murdered our squaws, our children. What white man has done these things to us? The face of the Sioux is red, but his heart is black. But the heart of the pale face has ever been red to the Crow. The scalp of no white man hangs in our lodges. They are thick as grass in the wigwams of the Sioux. The great white chief will lead us against no other tribe of red men. Our war is with the Sioux and only them. We want their horses for our young men, and their mules for our squaws. The Sioux have trampled upon our hearts. We shall spit upon their scalps. The great white chief sees that my young men have come to the fight. No Sioux shall see their backs. Where the white warrior goes there shall we be also. It is good. Is my brother content.<sup>22</sup>

With that speech, Old Crow recruited one hundred and 175 Crow warriors for Crook.

Crook came close to losing his Crow scouts several times prior to them linking up with him on the 14th. Frank Gruard confirmed Crook's previous fears that Ben Arnold had

scared away the Crow advance party that was attempting to link-up with Crook late in the evening on June 7th. Frank Gruard kept the Crow scouts from abandoning the mission by assuring them that there was no trap and the Army needed the Crow and the Crow needed the army to defeat the Sioux.

The second incident was when Crook abandoned the bivouac site on the Tongue River after the Cheyenne raid on June 9th. After reading the signs, the Crow immediately concluded that there had been a minor skirmish and the army was in retreat from the Sioux. Gruard again assured the Crows that this was not the case and the army was going to war with the Sioux and would defeat them. Gruard lived with the Indians for years and understood the warrior culture of the Plains Indians. The Plains Indians measured their manhood by brave deeds performed in battle. He used this knowledge to his advantage and appealed to their pride as warriors to continue or they could quit and run from battle like squaws.

As Gruard and his fellow guides approached the main bivouac site at Goose Creek, only Chief Old Crow was willing to enter the camp without further assurance that this was not a trap. Big Bat had convinced another sixteen warriors to follow at a distance. The main party of Indians, however, chose to stay about ten miles from the main bivouac site to see what was going to happen. Crook sent Captain Andrew S. Burt, commander of H Company, Ninth Infantry, who

knew many of the Crow warriors from his previous assignment near their reservation, Louis Richaud and Chief Old Crow to bring the rest of the Crows into camp.

Crook presented full military honors for the Crow warriors. He had the infantry and mounted cavalry lined up in parade formation which extended for nearly a mile. As the Crow warriors passed the new allies observed each other with respect as a fighting force. Most of the soldiers were truly impressed with the stature, bearing, and weaponry of the Crow. As the Crow were closing into camp, Tom Cosgrove, a former confederate officer who was now employed by the U.S Army, led the Shoshone, under Old Washakie, toward camp. Crook immediately remounted his troops for another reception with full military honors. Bourke had this to say about the Shoshone arrival:

A long line of glittering lances and brightly polished weapons of fire announced the anxiously expected advent of our other allies, The Shoshones, or Snakes, who to the number of (86) eighty-six came galloping rapidly to headquarters and came left to front in splendid style. No trained soldiers ever executed the evolution more prettily. The Shoshones were not slow to perceive the favorable impression made and when the time came for them to file off by the right, moved with the precision of clock-work and the pride of veterans. A Grand council was the next feature of the evening's entertainment....<sup>23</sup>

Crook, his troop commanders, and staff met with a large representation of both the Crow and Shoshone around the council fire to discuss the strategy. The Indian allies were eager for battle. Their only demand was the privilege

to scout in their own way. Crook readily agreed, as he knew the value of Indians scouting against Indians. The war council ended at 2220. The Crow had covered sixty miles in one day; but instead of bedding down, they conducted war dances that seemed to have a semi-religious character through the night.<sup>24</sup>

Crook issued a verbal warning order to his command prior to retiring for the evening. The command would proceed into Sioux country light and fast. The infantry would mount the mules. Each man would carry four days of rations with one hundred rounds of ammunition. Critical supplies (i.e., medical supplies, pioneer tools, and reserve ammunition) would be transferred from the wagons to the pack trains. The wagons would be secured with approximately one hundred men "on a island strategically located near the junction of Big and Little Goose Creeks"<sup>25</sup> under command of Captain John V. Furey, Chief Quartermaster for the expedition. Crook made a conscious decision to increase his speed and mobility over his staying power in the field. Crook now had to find the village, destroy it, and link back up with his trains. His alternate plan was to capture the Indian food stores or link-up with Terry for support until his train could be brought forward. Crook accepted the risk of losing his main logistical support based on his successful campaigns against the Appaches using the same techniques.



On June 15th, Major Alex Chambers, commander of the expedition's infantry, and Burt were not quite prepared for the humbling experience of mounting untrained infantry onto unbroken mules. The infantry was spread out over a five mile area around the bivouac site. The site was covered with bucking mules and flying Infantrymen landing on all parts of their bodies. The cavalry and the Indian allies watched in wonderment and tormented the poor infantry soldiers trying to master the undisciplined mules. Some of the Indians would jump on a riderless mule to show the humbled infantrymen how easy riding really was. After the novelty of the "Mule Brigade" (as the infantry was now referred to) wore off, the rest of the command started preparations to depart. Weapons were cleaned, horses reshod, haversacks and saddlebags filled, ammunition distributed, and orders disseminated. Crook, however, did not give away any of his plans or overall strategy for the campaign. Mills later expressed his frustration, "I did not think that General Crook knew where they [Crazy Horse and the Sioux] were, and I did not think our friendly Indians knew where they were and no one conceived we would find them in the great force we did."<sup>26</sup>

Crook did receive the following intelligence reports from his new Crow allies on the night of the 14th:

Gibbon was on the banks of the Rosebud near the Yellowstone, unable to cross for the Sioux were holding him at bay; the main body of the Sioux were

encamped on the Tongue River at the mouth of Otter Creek; and the village of Crazy Horse was thought to be located on the Tongue River."<sup>27</sup>

Crook's trusted guide, Frank Guard, did not agree with the Crow on the location of the Sioux village. John Finerty of the "Chicago Times" said this about Frank Guard: "He was then about twenty-eight years of age, was familiar with every inch of the country, could speak nearly every Indian dialect and was invaluable to General Crook, who would rather have a third of his command lost, it is said than be deprived of Frank Guard."<sup>28</sup> The intelligence report from the Crows was over three weeks old and Guard told Crook that all the signs pointed to the Rosebud Valley. By this time, Crook had great confidence in Guard. Crook sent five Crows to scout in the Rosebud Valley's direction for the Sioux village. Foster wrote that "a Sioux village of 700 lodges, which means 2500 warriors [sic!], is on the Rosebud, about 45 miles from here."<sup>29</sup> In actuality they were on Rosebud Creek near present day Busby, Montana, only fifty-two miles from the expedition's camp at Goose Creek.<sup>30</sup>

A small party of Northern Cheyenne under Chief Magpie Eagle were camped in the vicinity of modern day Busby on Trail Creek, a branch of the Rosebud. But the big prize, the main Sioux village, was moving into the Little Big Horn Valley to set up their base camp. They had sent Little Hawk, who led the raid against Crook's Expedition on June 9th, to spy on the expedition and report back as soon as

Crook made his intentions known. Little Hawk's reports were critical as the elders called a council of war the evening of the 16th.

Crook was now organized and ready for combat. He mounted his entire forces so that it could take the fight to the enemy. Crook identified the center of gravity as the Sioux village: destroy the village and you have won the war. Nowhere on the western frontier had there been such a strong force as the Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition with their Crow and Shoshone allies. Morale was soaring. The command all a feeling of invincibility; not a single man considered as they departed the camp at Goose Creek 0600 hours on June 16th.

## Endnotes

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CHAPTER 4  
BATTLE OF THE ROSEBUD  
OR  
"WHERE THE GIRL SAVED HER BROTHER"

Crook led out of the Goose Creek camp with fifteen companies of cavalry under the command of Colonel Royall on June 16th. The pack train followed with the infantry bringing up the rear, mounted on their new acquisitions. The Crows were on the west flank of the march column with the Shoshone on the east flank. The expedition was marching through some of the finest game country in the world. John Finerty had a realistic view of what this country meant to the Sioux: "We had begun to enter the great northern hunting grounds par excellence, the country dear to the heart of the doomed savage and for which he was willing to shed his life blood to the very last drop."<sup>1</sup>

As the expedition reached the high ground along a grassy slope, the members of the expedition beheld a site few had ever seen. Buffalo were grazing on both sides of the trail in the thousands. The officers had to steady their troopers, but there was no holding back the Crows & the Shoshones. They charged into the herd and shot wildly, killing for killing's sake. Crook sent a message to stop,

but was ignored. He was concerned that the undisciplined and wild shooting spree would compromise the expedition and spoil all chance of surprising the Sioux village. The Crows response to the indiscriminate shooting was "better to kill the buffalo now than have the buffalo feed the Sioux."<sup>2</sup> The killing spree lasted for twenty-five miles. There was nothing Crook could do to check the actions of his Indian allies short of military force. It was too late in the game to make enemies of the Crow or Shoshone, therefore Crook could only grit his teeth and stew in anger at the undisciplined behavior of his Indian allies.

As the expedition was moving and the Indian allies were on their killing spree, they came in contact with a small party of hostiles. It is not clear whether the hostile party was part of Chief Magpie Eagle's band, or Little Hawk's scouting party, who was reporting back to Crazy Horse.<sup>3</sup> The hostile force exchanged insults with the Crow warriors and then fled toward the Rosebud. This reinforced Crook's belief that the hostile village he sought was on the Rosebud.

Once Little Hawk confirmed where Crook was heading and the size and strength of the force, either by personal reconnaissance or reports from Magpie's warriors, he raced

off to report to Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull at the main Sioux Camp that was now located in the Little Big Horn Valley. The young Sioux warriors were in a frenzy, chomping at the bit at the chance of counting coup against the white pony soldiers and their Indian allies. The older chiefs wanted to wait until Crook's expedition moved closer to the village before attacking. However, the young warriors wouldn't listen. They wanted a chance at counting coups and becoming great warriors like those before them. Crazy Horse was looked at by all in the Sioux camp as a great war chief. He told the young warriors he would lead them into battle; but there should not be any counting coup. Crazy Horse told the young warriors that the soldiers had no honor and they would come for one reason only, to kill as many Sioux as they could. He explained that the Sioux must fight the white man on his own terms and kill as many soldiers as possible and not take any unnecessary risk counting coup.<sup>4</sup>

As the war council broke up, it was decided that a quarter of the warriors with the old chiefs would stay behind to protect the village.<sup>5</sup> The rest of the warriors moved out together under Crazy Horse late on the 16th of June for the Rosebud Valley. The war party was made up of Northern Cheyenne, Oglala, Miniconjou, Sans Arc, and Brule Sioux. The Hukpapas started later in the morning and were led by Sitting Bull who was still weak from his exhausting and torturous Sun Dance. Crazy Horse marched his Sioux in



column formation with front, rear, and flank guards toward the last known location of the soldiers. He kept a tight reign on his young warriors because he did not want his surprise attack to be compromised. Crazy Horse planned to lure Crook down the Rosebud Valley where it narrows to the north, and have his main force under Sitting Bull and Gaul ambush the expedition in the broken and close terrain.<sup>6</sup>

The Big Horn & Yellowstone Expedition moved a total of thirty-five miles before reaching their bivouac site between the forks where the Rosebud ran nearly strait east. Crook chose a bivouac site in the low ground with surrounding bluffs that formed an amphitheater. The Crow and Shoshone were still shooting buffalo until the sunset. Crook picked a defendable bivouac area that could also serve as a good hide site for a large force. He posted pickets along the high ground and brought the live stock into the center of camp. He gave orders that no fires were to be built and the command must concentrate on security of the force. As the Crow and Shoshone entered camp, they immediately built fires, cooked the buffalo that they carried off the trail and started their war ritual all over again to the early hours on the 17th. Crook was very angry and frustrated with his new allies, but could ill afford to loose them at this stage of the game. He was taking the proper precautions, but his Indian allies were compromising all the steps he was taking to protect the force. As the

Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition slept, A large part of the Sioux nation was on the march to meet them.

**The Battle of the Rosebud.** First call was at 0300 on June 17th. Crook sent an Indian scouting party ahead of the main column to locate the Sioux-Cheyenne village that was believed to be five to ten miles up the Rosebud Creek as it turns due north. Finerty commented that the Snakes, better known as the Shoshone, to their credit complied with "martial alacrity," but the Crows seemed reluctant to move ahead on their own. The singing and carefree spirit of the Indian allies turned serious as a large party of Shoshone and Crow Scouts moved ahead of the column.<sup>7</sup>

The Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition was the largest force ever assembled to date to fight in the Indian wars. The U.S. Cavalry and their Indian allies thought that the Sioux could not field any force that could pose a serious threat to the command. Finerty described the attitude of the troopers in the expedition on the morning of the fight: "They were as cheerful as ever, joked with each other in low tones, and occasionally borrowed, or lent, a chew of tobacco in order to kill time. A few of the younger men, grasping the pommels of their saddles and leaning their heads against their horses dropped off into a cat nap."<sup>8</sup>

Crook was quick to organize and had his column on the march by 0600. The infantry mounted their mules and led out but were soon overtaken by the cavalry. After the

column had traveled approximately five miles, they arrived between two bends along the Rosebud at approximately 0800. The column halted in a valley very much like the one that they bivouacked at the previous night. Finerty describes:

Rosebud stream, indicated by the thick growth of wild roses or sweet brier from which its name is derived, flowed sluggishly through it, dividing it from south to north into two equal parts. The Hills seemed to rise on every side, and we were within easy musket shot of those most remote.<sup>9</sup>

Crook ordered the halt to rest and feed the worn out animals. The 35 mile march on the 16th was taking its toll. He probably also picked this location because it was well concealed and seemed easy to secure while he waited to hear from his small scouting party that he sent out earlier in the morning. The order was given to unsaddle the horses. As the soldiers executed the order, the Crow scouts were becoming very excited and informed Crook that there was recent sign of the enemy in the area. Crook ordered pickets out along the foot of the northern bluffs and the expedition went into bivouac.<sup>10</sup>

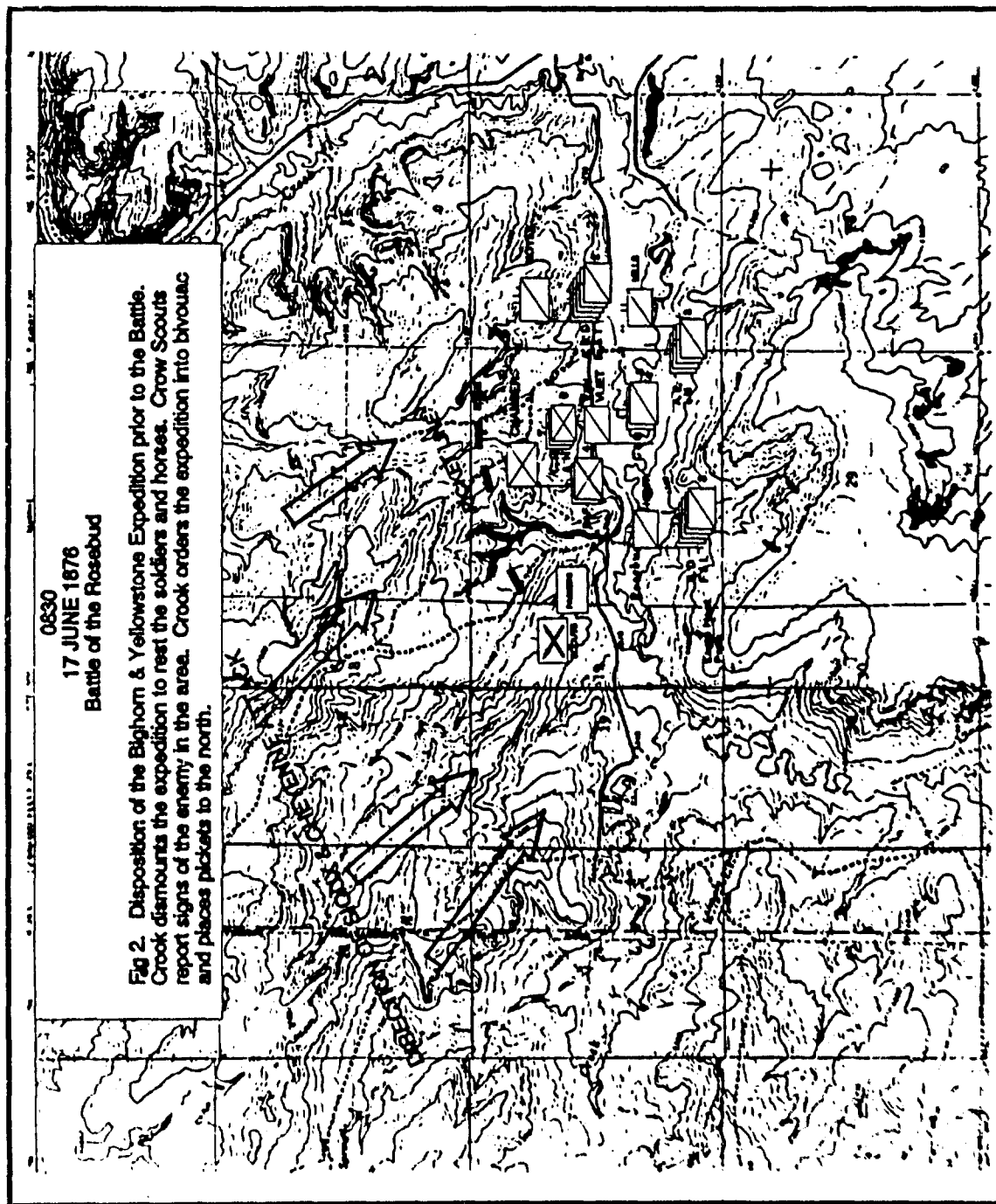
Crook had picked a good hide site for the expedition while he waited the return of his Indian scouts. He positioned his unit in an amphitheater with high bluffs to the North and South. On the east, there was a ridge that ran north-south. The northern and southern bluffs ran east-west, forming a ravine where he tucked away most of his command. With the proper security measures, this location

would have made an excellent secure hide site for Crook's large force. However, he was compromised on the 16th and the Sioux knew his general, if not his exact, location.

After being at a high state of readiness for fifteen and then thirty minutes, the command started to relax. The men not on the picket line became increasingly less vigilant. Some of the reporters started making notes, the officers sprawled out on the grass and started to tell war stories; Crook, Bourke and several other officers broke open a deck of cards. The young Shoshone warriors were racing their ponies. Crook still believed he was too strong a force to be attacked by the Sioux. All he had to do now was to sit tight in his new hide site and wait for his intelligence reports from his Indian scouts.

Located on the North side of the stream that runs East-West in the amphitheater near the present day Slim Kolbold house were companies A, B, E, G, and I of the 2nd Cavalry, under the command of Noyes. Just behind him was Van Vliet's battalion, consisting of Companies C and G. The infantry were to the west of Noyes. The Packers, Crow and Shoshone were toward the rear and west of the infantry. Mills and Companies A, E, I, and M were located on the South side of the stream. Henry's battalion consisting of Companies B, D, F, and L were west of Mill's battalion."  
(See fig. 2)

Around 0830, members in the command heard shooting



in the distance, but shrugged it off as friendly Indian scouts shooting buffalo. As the shots got louder and more frequent, the command started growing concerned. Mills moved to the high ground to the south so he could see what was happening in the distance. He reported Indians in great numbers moving south, approximately two miles away.

Crazy Horse's force was traveling in column formation with an advance and flank guards. About seven miles to the north of Crook's position, his advanced guard made contact with the Crow and Shoshone Scouts. The Indian scouts immediately engaged the advance guard, but soon saw the main body of the Sioux charging towards them. The Crow and Shoshone Scouts dug their heels into their mounts and raced their horses back to Crook's position as fast their mounts could carry them. Within minutes of hearing the first shots, Humpy and the rest of the scouts raced into camp with Humpy yelling: "Lakota! Lakota! Lakota!" The translation recorded by Bourke was "heap Sioux! heap Sioux!, heap Sioux!"<sup>12</sup>

Crazy Horse had a tentative plan prior to departing his camp on the 16th. He was going to lure Crook's forces piece meal or as a whole down the Rosebud Valley where it narrows to the north and set an ambush to wipe out Crook's force.<sup>13</sup> Crazy Horse was believed to have taken part as the decoy force that lured Captain William Judd Fetterman and eighty men out of the gates of Fort Phil Kearny to a pre-

designated ambush site and massacred the entire eighty-one man command in 1866.<sup>14</sup> He planned the same fate for Crook's Bighorn and Yellowstone expedition.

The Sioux and Cheyenne warriors that were in the advance guard were leading the pursuit of the friendly Indian scouts and followed them right into the picket line on the lower northern bluffs. Meanwhile, the main body of the Sioux and Cheyenne were reinforcing the attack from the north and were massing on the hills to the northwest. Fighting was fierce and often went to hand to hand combat. The Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition was tactically surprised and disorganized. Troopers were frantically saddling mounts while leaders were getting their commands under tight control. Officers and sergeants were busy giving orders while troopers scurried for their weapons, and saddled their mounts.

The hostiles continued to press the attack, but were momentarily halted at the picket line. The thinly lined pickets were in trouble. The command did not have enough firepower forward to stop the initial Sioux-Cheyenne assault. Captain George M. Randall, 23d Infantry, Chief of Scouts for the expedition, without orders quickly organized the Crow and Shoshone warriors and led an assault against the enemy at the picket line. For twenty precious minutes Randall and his Indian scouts met charge with counter charge.<sup>15</sup> In some of the fiercest fighting of the battle,

the Crow and the Shoshone scouts earned the respect and gratitude of the command for delaying the Sioux attack against the main body. These critical twenty minutes allowed the leaders and troopers to get organized, assess the situation and maneuver.

Upon contact, Crook immediately mounted his horse and rode north to the high ground held by the pickets to get a commander's assessment of the situation. Prior to leaving he left orders for Major A. H. Evans, commander of the 3rd Cavalry(-), to hold the bluffs to the south and saddle up the rest of the command.

While Crook was assessing the situation to the north, Evans took charge of those around him and sent Van Vliet with companies C & G of the 3rd Cavalry to seize and hold the high bluffs to the south. As Van Vliet reached the military crest, he met resistance from an oncoming Sioux force, who were attempting to occupy the bluffs from the east. Van Vliet quickly dismounted forming a skirmish line and drove the Sioux back and secured Crook's rear.

While Van Vliet was seizing the southern bluff, Chambers ordered Companies G & H, of the 9th Infantry, commanded by Burt and Captain Thomas B. Burrowes, commander Company G, Ninth Infantry, to hold the low bluffs to the north where the pickets and friendly Indians were valiantly holding the line. Companies B, D, I, E, of the 2nd Cavalry, under Noyes dismounted to support the infantry maneuver.

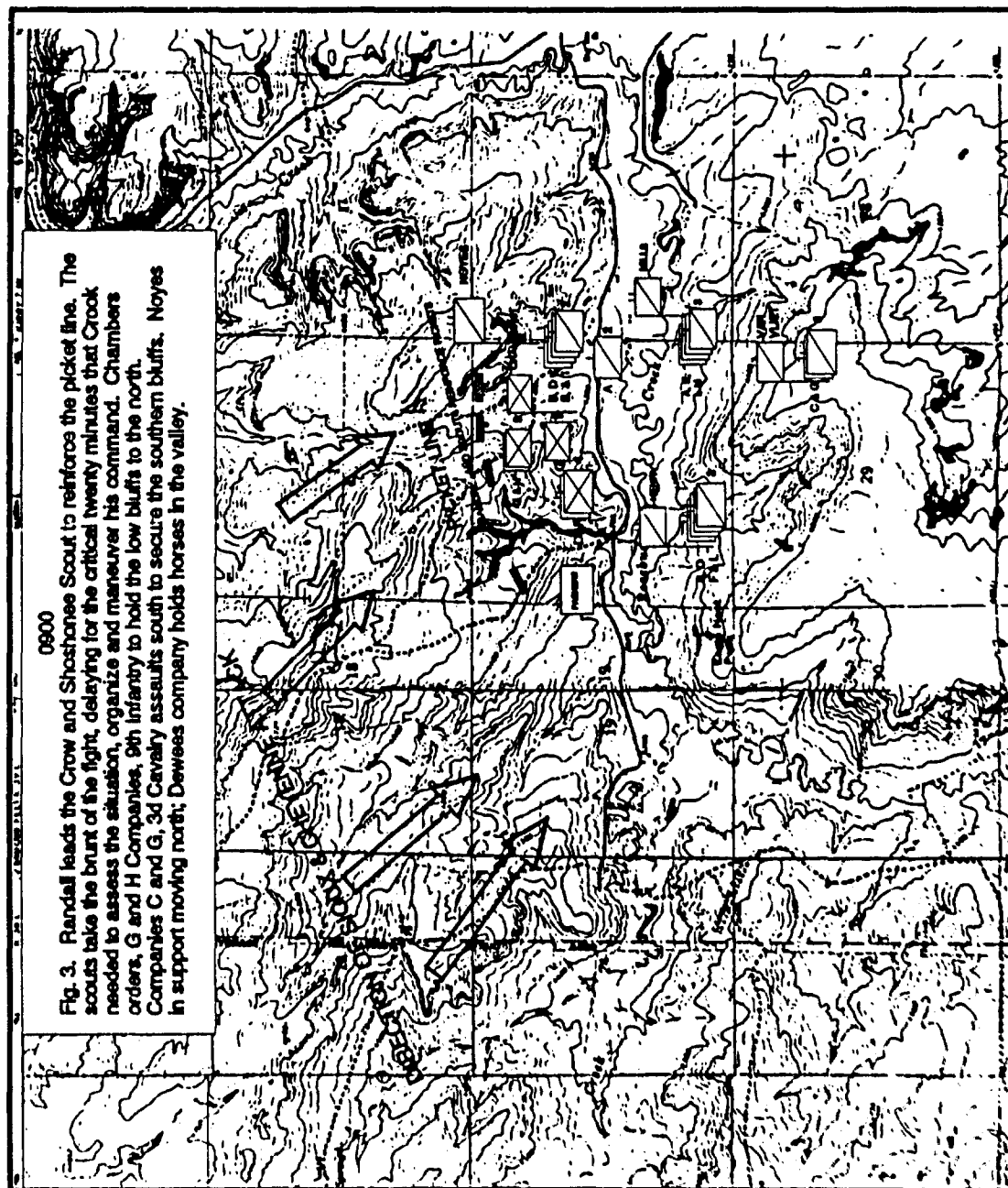


Captain Thomas B. Dewees' Company A, 2nd Cavalry, held the horses in the valley for the other four companies. (See fig. 3).

As the Infantry approached the friendly line, Crazy Horse split his force in two and sent them around both flanks. One force spun off to the east to try to rout the cavalry and capture the horses. However, the men of the 9th Infantry and 2nd Cavalry were well concealed and were waiting for them. Their plan was to have the friendly Indians withdraw under pressure of the Sioux. As the enemy pressed their attack, Burt and Burrows would form the penetration and ambush the enemy. They waited until the Sioux force had closed within 150 yards and then opened up with all they had. The Sioux force quickly retreated and dissipated to the north.

As Evans was ordering troops to the north, Sioux war parties began to hit the infantry's western flank. He quickly dispatched Henry with two companies five hundred yards to the west and south of Kollmar Creek to block enemy penetration into the defensive perimeter that Crook was trying to form.

Crazy Horse's strength at the Rosebud is estimated from seven hundred and fifty to fifteen hundred, including one hundred Cheyenne.<sup>16</sup> Some soldiers and Finerty reported a Sioux chief (believed to be Crazy Horse) giving direction to



his force from the high ground to the north.<sup>17</sup> The expediency of maneuver by the Sioux during the battle indicates that someone was probably directing the Sioux and Cheyenne force and concentrating them at critical points.

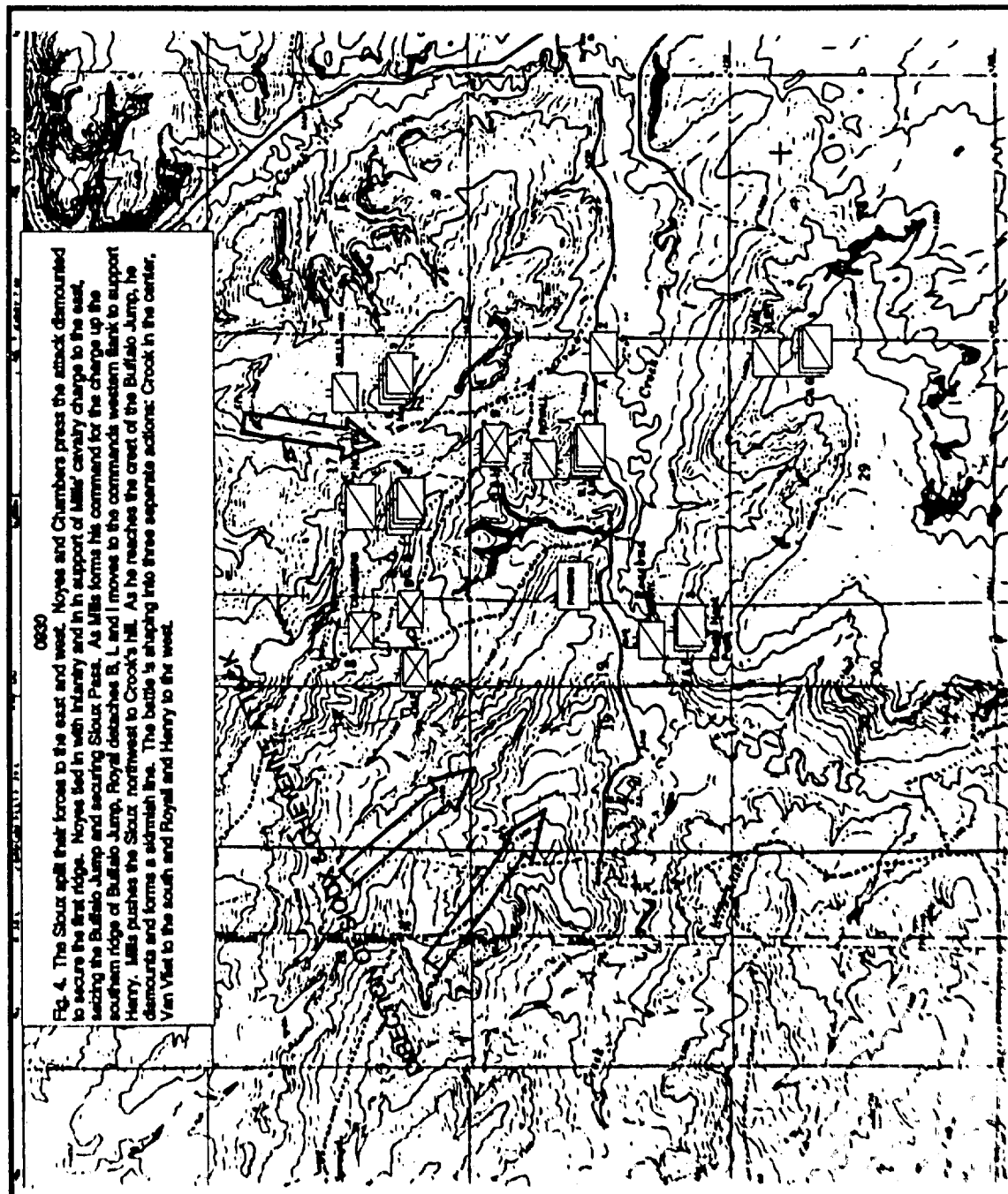
As the infantry and 2nd Cavalry were pushing the Sioux and Cheyenne back north, Mills organized and mounted his battalion. Evans attached Henry's remaining two companies to Mills and with Troops A, B, E, L, I, and M, was ordered to bound to the east and to seize the next most northern bluff (Buffalo Jump) commanding Sioux Pass. Mills gave the order from the front of the formation to turn the flank for the final charge up the bluff.

As Mills' was moving his formation to the southern slope of Buffalo Jump, Royall was making his way to the front of the formation and observed the infantry and second Cavalry attacking north on Mills' western flank. He had just come from observing Henry's situation and returned for more troops. He assessed that Mills could complete his attack with three companies with Noyes in support and holding his western flank. He therefore took Company I, under Andrews, and Henry's remaining two companies and deployed them to the western flank of the main body to support Henry. When Mills' dismounted his troops in a skirmish line on top of this ridge, it was then he discovered Royall had detached three troops from him.

As Mills formed his skirmish line, a Cheyenne warrior, by the name of Comes-In-Sight charged toward Mills' position. The cavalry shot his horse out from under him and he was caught out in the open with the cavalry zeroing their weapons on him. As this was unfolding, a Cheyenne rider started zig zaging toward the horseless warrior, dodging bullets all the way. The rider reached Comes-In-Sight and pulled him up on the horse and escaped back to the Sioux lines. The Sioux and Cheyenne warriors all cheered from a distance at this brave rider. The rider was the warrior's sister, Buffalo-Calf-Road-Woman, and this battle was named by the Cheyenne and Sioux "Where the Sister Saved her Brother."<sup>18</sup>

Noyes and Chambers were on line, attacking dismounted to seize the first plateau as Mills was attacking mounted to push the Sioux off the eastern ridge (known as the Buffalo Jump). Mills' Cavalry was moving too fast on horse back to use their carbines, many fired revolvers as they neared the bluffs. As they closed to within 50 paces of their objective, the Sioux would bound back to the next set of bluffs to the west. Mills immediately dismounted his troops and formed skirmishers along the rocky crest. (See fig. 4)

By 0930, Crook's battle was shaping into three separate actions. The first action with Crook in the center, controlling the infantry, Mills' battalion in the



east, and 2nd Cavalry under Noyes and Randall's scouts. The second action with Royall and Henry in the west, and the third action with Van Vliet covering the commands rear on the high southern bluffs. As the battle progressed, Crook lost the flexibility of deploying Royall and Van Vliet as the three separate commands maneuvered out of support range of each other.

After Mills' first successful charge, the fight began to shift heavily from the north to the northwest and west. It was about 0930 when Crazy Horse retreated westward to Crook's Hill and laid down heavy suppressive fire on the slowly advancing troops of C Company, 9th Infantry, D and F Companies, 4th Infantry and the second Cavalry minus A Troop. As the Infantry held their ground with their long range carbines, the hostiles started to swarm toward their flank to the southwest.

Crook had been fighting about an hour and the Sioux retained the initiative. Tired of getting shot at from the high ground, Crook knew the only way to take the initiative away from the Sioux-Cheyenne was to seize the decisive terrain to the north. So he ordered Mills to make a second charge and seize what is now known as Crook's Hill. As Mills was charging the ridge line from the east the infantry companies and the dismounted 2nd Cavalry, were formed in a skirmish line over a mile long, and were prepared to make their way to top of Crook's Hill on order.

Burt and Burrowes companies were ordered to join the skirmish line at this point. Burrows immediately moved to link-up with Chambers and Burt followed an hour later bringing the mules and wounded.

Mills cleared the ridge, dismounted and formed a skirmish line and oriented his fires west. Crazy Horse's forces were pushed off to the west where they set up positions on Conical Hill and began to mass southwest following the ridge line. Crazy Horse continued to direct suppressive fire toward Mills' defensive positions.

After securing his gains on top of the hill, Mills started to form for another cavalry charge, when Crook sent word to hold his ground. As Mills cleared the ridge, the infantry and 2nd Cavalry sent a portion of the force to secure the horses and mules from the valley below and then advanced to join Mills' at the top of Crook's Hill. Crook was now in a position to form a strong defensive perimeter in the center of the battle field.

As Mills was conducting his second charge, pushing the Sioux further west, the action quickly shifted to Henry and Royall. The Sioux had seized a lower ridge a half a mile south across Kollmar Creek and parallel with the main crest. They were putting suppressive fire into the western flank, where Henry's and Royall's positions were. Royall took command of all the elements of the 3rd Cavalry on the western flank (Companies B, D, E, L, and I), pushing west,

steadily advancing up Kollmar Creek to clear the Sioux from their positions. He fought ridge to ridge, clearing the Sioux from his immediate front.

The Sioux would lay down suppressive fire to harass Royall's command, then withdraw under pressure in front of Royall's slow advance. Royall was taking Crazy Horse's bait. Royall persisted with what he perceived as successful counter-attacks against the Sioux positions. With each advance, he was getting further and further away from the main body. Crazy Horse was drawing him into an ambush while cutting him off from his support. (See fig 5).

Around 1030, Royall advanced to the head of Kollmar Creek and halted with Companies D, B, L, and F. Andrews continued to press west to a hill top known now as Andrew's Point with a Troop (minus). He sent LT Foster with a platoon to drive the Sioux off what is known as Foster's Ridge, approximately 400yds west by southwest from Andrews Point. The Sioux kept giving ground to further lure the small force out of support range.

As Andrews observed Foster's fight, he realized that he was in danger of being cut off. He immediately ordered Foster to return without delay. Royall also realized his lead company's situation and ordered Andrews to fall back and rejoin his command. Royall integrated Andrew's company and defended along the east-west ridge,



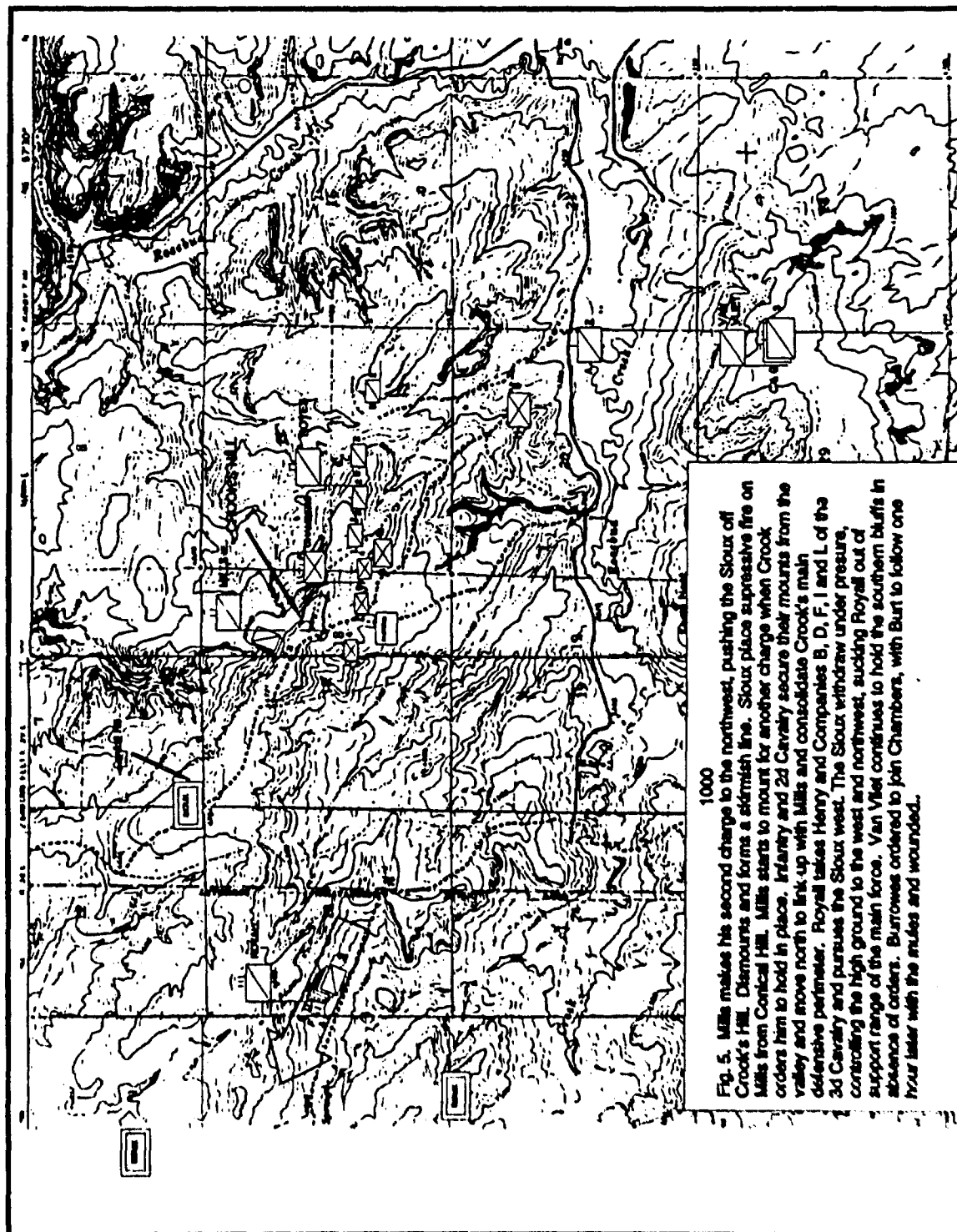


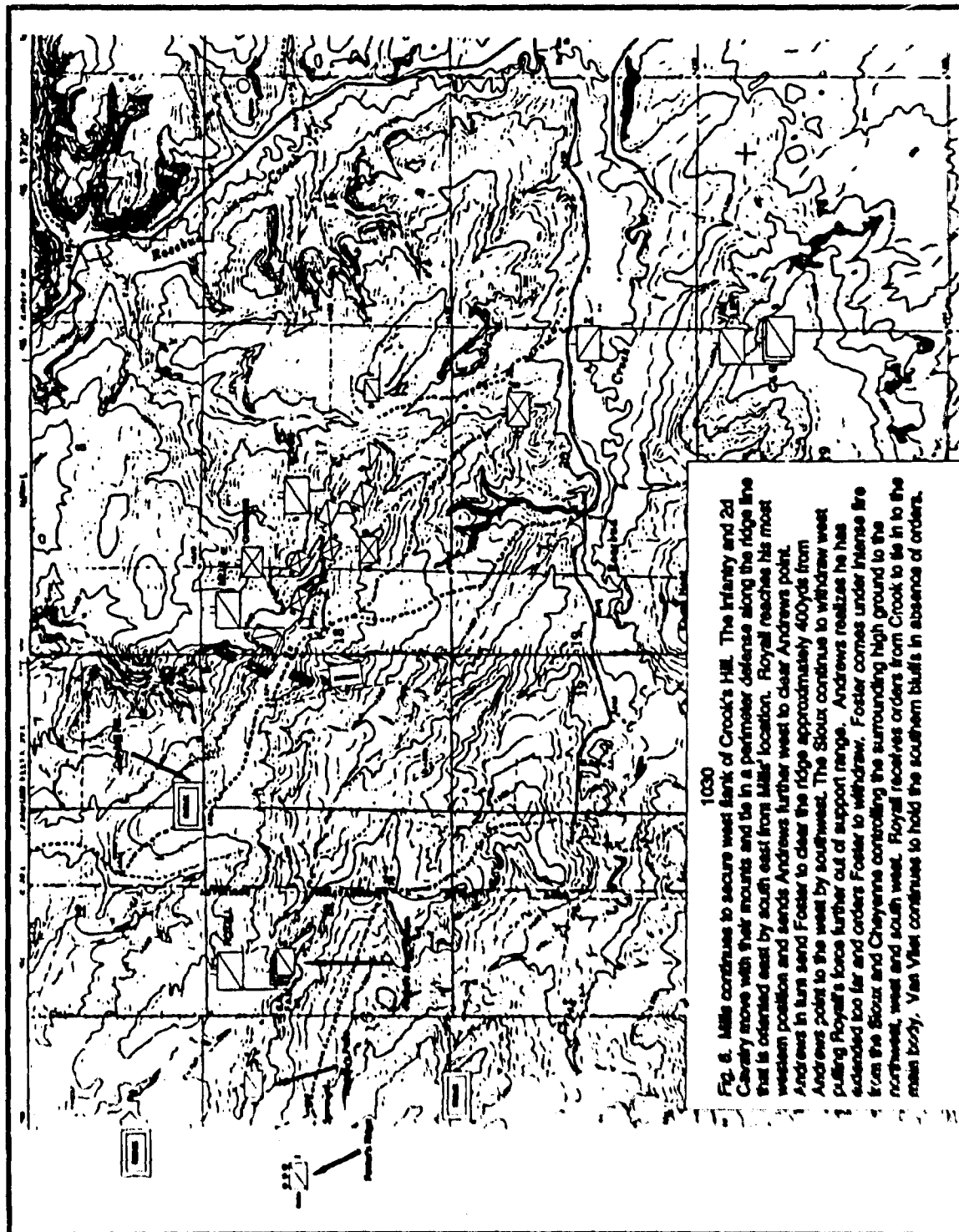
Fig. 5. Mills makes his second charge to the northwest, pushing the Sioux off Crook's Hill. Dismounts and forms a skirmish line. Sioux place suppressive fire on Mills from Cornical Hill. Mills starts to mount for another charge when Crook orders him to hold in place. Infantry and 2d Cavalry secure their mounts from the valley and move north to link up with Mills and consolidate Crook's main defensive perimeter. Royall takes Henry and Companies B, D, F, I and L of the 3d Cavalry and pursues the Sioux west. The Sioux withdraw under pressure, controlling the high ground to the west and northwest, sucking Royall out of support range of the main force. Van Vleet continues to hold the southern bluffs in absence of orders. Burrows ordered to join Chambers, with Burt to follow one hour later with the mules and wounded.

approximately 600 yards southeast of the high rocky point, known as Andrew's Point. This was Royall's first position.

Meanwhile, Crook consolidated his defensive perimeter along Crook's Hill, extending it down the ridge, southeast from Mills' skirmish line. He continued to take fire from Conical Hill, but otherwise the main Sioux attack had shifted towards Royall. (See fig. 6)

Once Crook was satisfied that his position was secure, he sent word to Royall to tie in to the main body. There was about a mile and half of rough open terrain between his command and Crook's main body. The Sioux controlled the high ground to the northwest and could easily overtake the command if he tried to retreat across the rough open ground without cover by fire. An estimated five hundred hostiles were swarming around Royall's position. To comply with the order, he sent Meinhold's company back to help extend the defense. Royall covered Meinhold's withdraw back to Crook's hill. At this point, if Royall tried to extract the entire command at once, the Sioux would have easily cut him off, catching him out in the open terrain while he was still out of support range from the main body. The only defensible terrain was right where he was, at his 1st position. For approximately the next two hours Royall was fighting for his life in this position.

Meanwhile, Crook was looking for ways to gain the initiative. He started to pull Mills off line. As he was



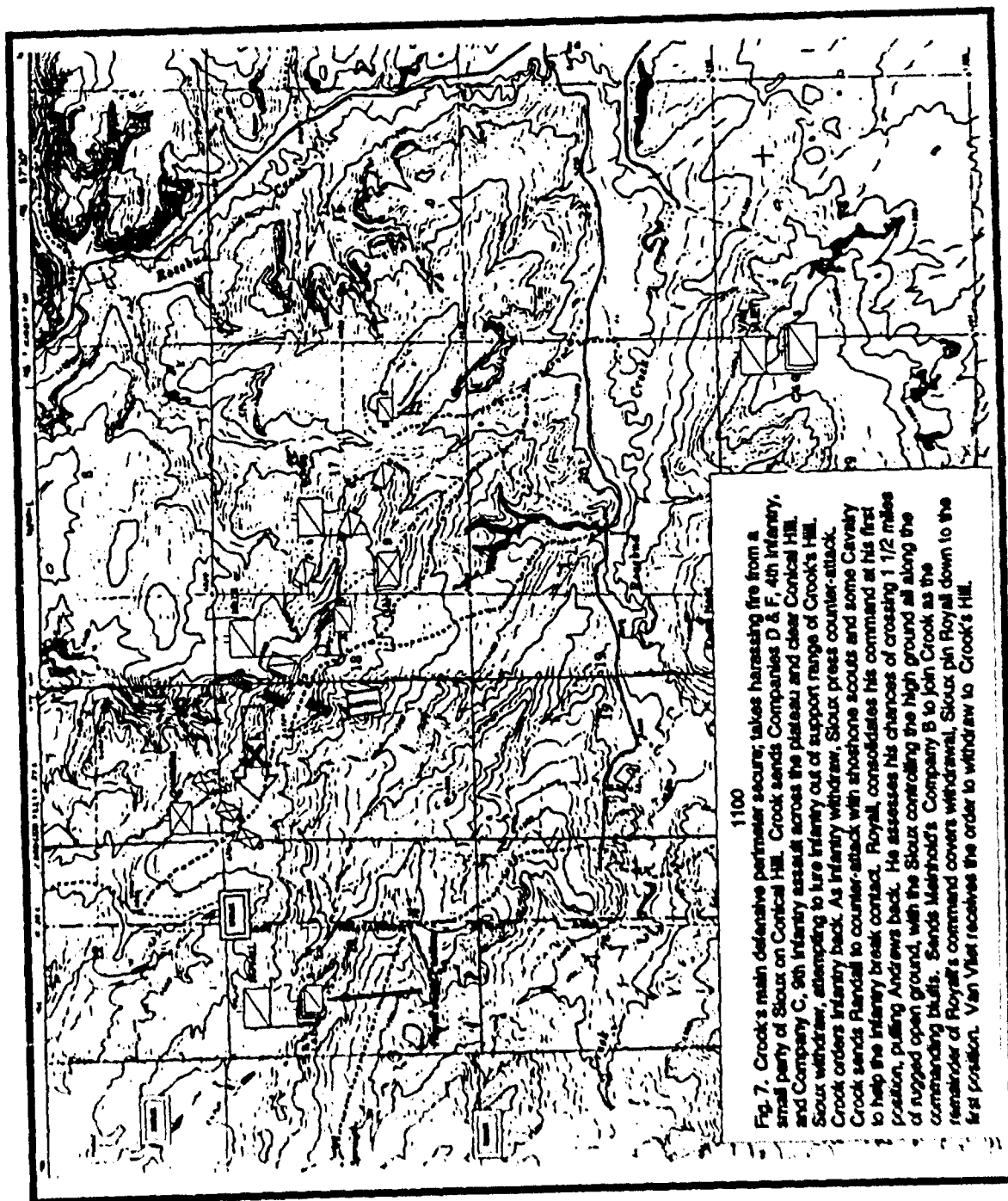
1030

Fig. 6. Mills continues to secure west flank of Crook's Hill. The Infantry and 2d Cavalry move with their mounts and tie in a perimeter defense along the ridge line that is oriented east by south east from Mills' location. Royall reaches his most western position and sends Andrews further west to clear Andrews point. Andrews in turn send Foster to clear the ridge approximately 400 yds from Andrews point to the west by southwest. The Sioux continue to withdraw west pulling Royall's force further out of support range. Andrews realizes he has extended too far and orders Foster to withdraw. Foster comes under intense fire from the Sioux and Cheyenne controlling the surrounding high ground to the northwest, west and south west. Royall receives orders from Crook to tie in to the main body. Van Vleet continues to hold the southern bluffs in absence of orders.

doing this, the Sioux around Conical Hill grew more aggressive and bold. They increased their harrassing fires and were making individual charges toward Crook's Hill. Crook was growing frustrated over the situation. He sent Companies D & F, 4th Infantry and C Company, 9th Infantry across the plateau to clear the Sioux from Conical Hill. The Infantry was successful crossing the open ground in a skirmish line with their long range weapons. The Sioux quickly pulled further west to see if the infantry would follow. When the infantry consolidated on Conical Hill, they poured suppressive fire on top of the infantry. Crook realized the infantry was on the edge of support range by the main body. With no real tactical advantage to be gained by continuing to hold Conical Hill, he ordered the infantry to withdraw. As the infantry withdrew the Sioux pressed the attack on them. Crook ordered Randall to counter-attack with his Shoshone scouts and some Cavalry. Bourke took charge of a small element of I Troop, 3rd Cavalry, and joined Randall's counter-attack. He made the following observations:

A detachment of Co I, 2nd Cavalry being without an officer, the men consented to follow my leadership and very gallantly stormed a rock breasted steep bluff(Conical Hill) on whose summit the Sioux had taken post firing from behind little piles of stones. The cowardly whelps would not give us a show at close quarters, but whenever our lines came within 300 yds of theirs, would make for the next ridge with pusillanimous haste. Our people were mostly on foot, hence the slowness of our advance. Once at the crest of the bluff, my men were ordered to rest and take breath previous to charging for the

other hill where our enemies more were. For a few minutes a very lively fire was pound in upon us and Sergeant Maher (Co I, 2nd Cav) was badly wounded in the right arm at or near the elbow. The Snakes had now formed ready to charge and it looked to me the best and speediest way to solve the question or who was to control that position. I determined to accompany them. Mounting my good natured little pony and placing myself in line on their right was not very long before I formed myself on the summit of the ridge in a place commanding an excellent view of the whole field. From the immediate front of our little party, the Sioux were flying in dismay to the number of fifty or their abouts. Mention should be made here of the gallantry of the enlisted men, who shared the perils of the charge. Private Leonard, Co A 3rd Cavalry and Bugler Snow, Co M same regiment. Major Randall came up to me and suggested a falling back from that point to one more sheltered in the rear. The Shoshones as is their want, executed the order at a gallop, leaving Bugler Snow and the writer alone on the ridge, inauspicious of danger. Scarcely had I mounted my horse and mechanically loaded my carbine, than I called out to Bugler Snow to mount at once as Sioux were charging up the ravine on left of Hill. Soon enough they came to the number of (30) thirty or more, poor Snow being still on the ground. I gave them the contents of my carbine, at not more than 30 yds at the same time yelling to make them believe there were still many of us there. Whether my purpose was answered or that their ponies were winded with climbing up the steep hill side, I don't presume to say: I only know they halted for one brief space, long enough however to let Snow and myself put spurs to our horses and rushed after our comrades, nearly 400 yards away. My usual good fortune attended one, but poor Snow got back to our lines badly shot through both arms, near the wrist. General Crook was at this point with the greater portions of Chambers, and Evans' battalions. He ordered Tom Moore to take his packers and form a line among the sandstone rocks directly in front of our standing point. It is nothing but waste of pen, ink & paper to say Tom Moore and his party performed their allotted duty cheerfully and well. The Sioux made a rush out to charge their, thinking from the paucity of numbers, our men could easily be driven. There must have been a mistake somewhere, as the Sioux now know to their cost. The interview lasted only a moment, but cost them two or three dead warriors, the same in wounded and a few ponies. Moore and his party are



1100

Fig. 7. Crook's main defensive perimeter secure; takes harassing fire from a small party of Sioux on Cortical Hill. Crook sends Companies D & F, 4th Infantry, and Company C, 9th Infantry assault across the plateau and clear Cortical Hill. Sioux withdraw, attempting to lure infantry out of support range of Crook's Hill. Crook orders infantry back. As infantry withdraw, Sioux press counter-attack. Crook sends Randall to counter-attack with shoshone scouts and some Cavalry to help the infantry break contact. Royall consolidates his command at his first position, pulling Andrews back. He assesses his chances of crossing 1 1/2 miles of rugged open ground, with the Sioux controlling the high ground all along the commanding bluffs. Sends Merrihew's Company B to join Crook as the remainder of Royall's command covers withdrawal, Sioux pin Royall down to the first position. Van Vleet receives the order to withdraw to Crook's Hill.

nearly all fine shots, cool men and old Indian fighters.  
[See fig. 7]<sup>19</sup>

It was around 1130 when the infantry returned, Crook ordered Evans to pull Mills off line, demonstrate on the east flank and prepare to move down the Rosebud Valley to find and destroy the Sioux village. Mills' was not to be distracted by the Sioux force, but was to focus on the village itself. Lawson and one platoon with Crow and Shoshone Scouts were to act as a flank guards. Meinhold's company, some packers and miners along with Noyes and Companies A, B, D, E, and I of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment were sent to support Mills' attack. In Crook's mind, the Sioux were only fighting this hard to cover the movement of the village that had to be no farther than eight miles up the Rosebud Valley. While the infantry was pulling back, Crook ordered Van Vliet and Royall to rejoin the main force on Crook's Hill. He needed to consolidate his command if he was going to be able to project a force down the Rosebud Valley and support it if necessary. Van Vliet closed by 1130 unopposed and was integrated in the perimeter defense. Royall could not comply immediately. He had to fight a retrograde action down Royall's Ridge to close the gap between his command and the main body.

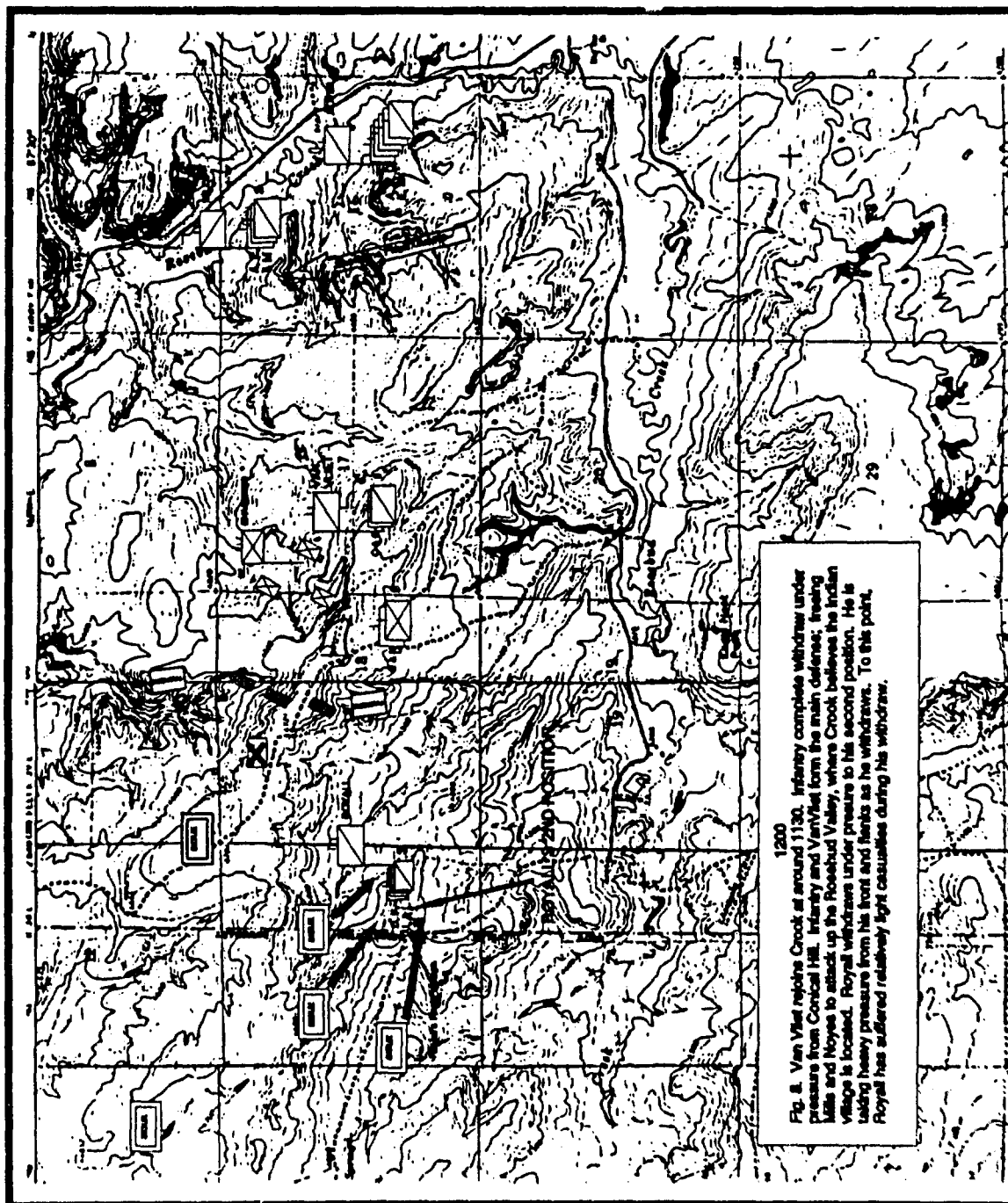
Royall was fighting his way back to his second position by 1200. Crook did not want to hold up Mills and Noyes any longer and sent Mills down the Rosebud Valley with

Noyes in a follow and support role.<sup>20</sup> Crook might have figured that if Mills and Noyes attacked up the valley, it might take some pressure off Royall. The Sioux and Cheyenne were hitting Royall hard from three sides as he withdrew. The Sioux quickly seized the abandoned positions along the ridge to the west, while mounted warriors were pressing the attack into the flanks from the north and south also. To this point Royall had kept his losses fairly low as he withdrew down the ridge. (See fig. 8)

Royall best describes his situation in his official report while he occupied the third position:

The advance points of the main crest which had before been occupied by troops, had by their withdrawal fallen into the possession of the enemy, observing which, knowing that my successful withdrawal was greatly endangered thereby and my experience in Indian warfare warning me that protection would be necessary in crossing the last defile which separated me from the command, I dispatched my Adjutant to the Brigadier General Commanding requesting such assistance, but before it was furnished, the enemy (being elsewhere disengaged) was upon us in full force and I was compelled to direct the company commanders to rejoin the main body as rapidly as possible. Thus far my casualties had been slight, but in effecting the crossing the firing was exceedingly severe and my loss was quadrupled. For protection in the passage I had directed Lieutenant Vroom and company to precede and line a crest which covered it; but by this time every Sioux in the engagement was surrounding this single battalion and the position assigned too exposed to be even temporarily occupied. The only killed were in this battalion under my immediate command and numbered nine. There were thirteen wounded including Captain Guy V. Henry 3rd Cavalry, a total of twenty-two casualties.<sup>21</sup>





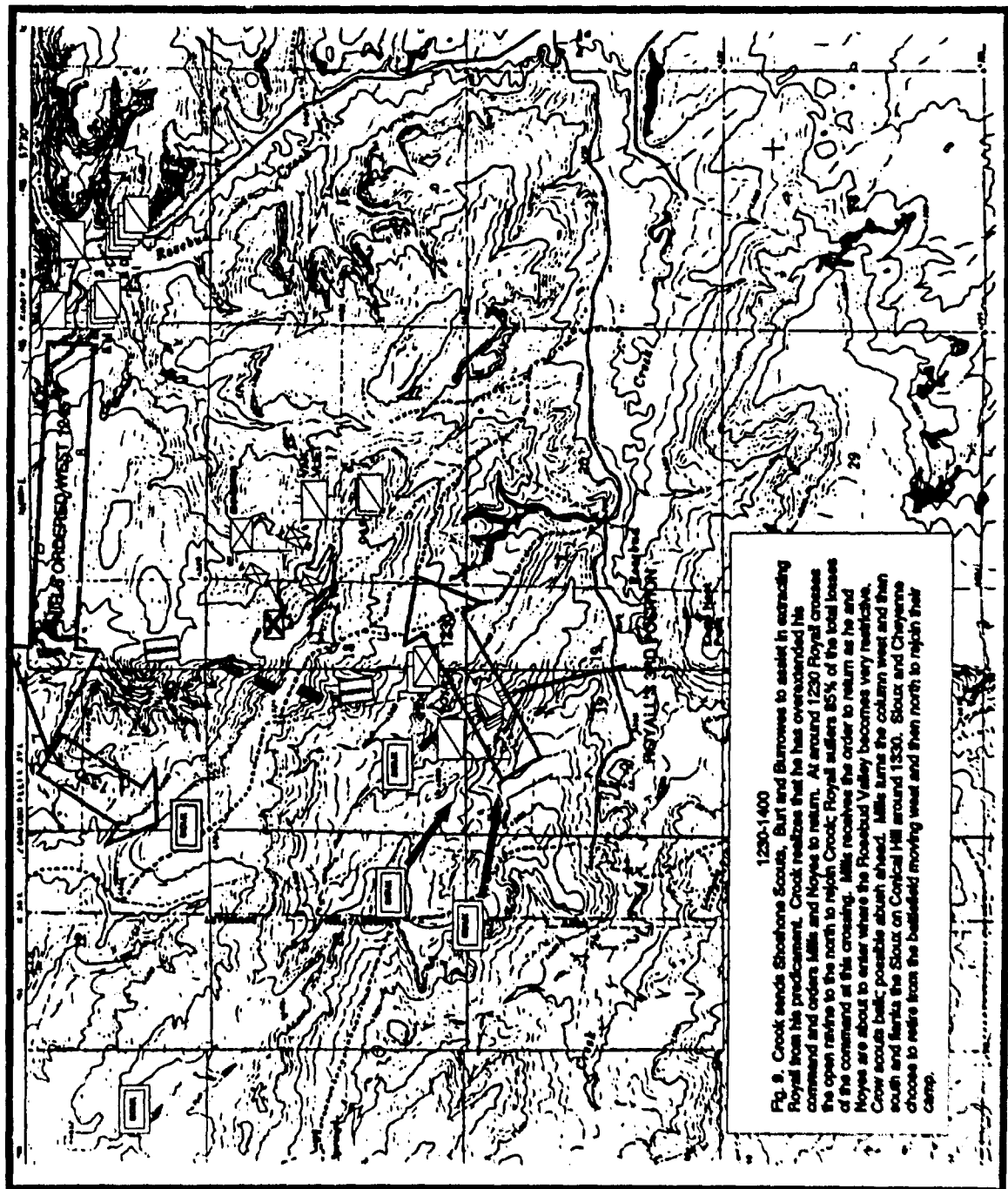
When Crook received the request for assistance from Royall, he realized he had over extended himself by sending Mills and Noyes off without ensuring he could extract Royall. He dispatched Major Nickerson, 23rd Infantry, A.D.C, to recall Mills and Noyes. With Royall in peril, he could not guarantee the support he promised in their attack up the Rosebud Valley. He then sent Burt and Burrowes south to occupy the ridge to the north of Kollmar Creek, directly across from Royall's 3rd position. He also sent some Shoshone scouts to assist in the withdrawal. As Henry's Company was making their final withdraw the third position, Henry was severely wounded in the face. He tried to stay on his horse, but the lose of blood caused him to collapse. As he fell his men started to lose heart and they were routed from their organized withdrawal. In the confusion they left Henry behind. As the Sioux closed in, a small party of Shoshone charged where Henry lay, delayed the oncoming Sioux until they could evacuate Henry back to friendly lines.

At around 1230 Royall made his final bound to the north with Burt and Burrowes covering his maneuver. As soon as they reached Crook's position the command was integrated in the defense and the killed and wounded evacuated to the field hospital.

Mills and Noyes were still making their way up the Rosebud Valley. The terrain was closing in so they split in

single file along the trail with Mills' column covering Noyes and Noyes column covering Mills. As the ground became more broken and the terrain continued to close, the Crow Scouts refused to go any further for fear of an ambush. As Mills' was pressing them, Nickerson caught up with the command and ordered them back to Crook's Hill. Mills took his command directly west of the Rosebud Valley and did a large sweep and maneuvered up the north slope of Conical Hill. The Sioux saw him coming and chose to retire for the day. They had been up for over thirty-six hours, rode all night and had fought most of the day. They were tired and hungry; it was time to go home. (See fig. 9)

By 1400, the battle was over. Crook took care of his wounded and buried his dead. At the end of the day's fighting, Bourke reported fifty-seven casualties of all kinds, including ten men killed outright, four mortally wounded and many of no significance. Crook bivouacked on the battlefield for the night. He was low on rations and ammunition, and had a significant number of wounded to take care of. He had little choice under the circumstances than to return to his supply base at Goose Creek and lick his wounds.



### Endnotes

1. Finerty, War-Path and Bivouac, 119.
2. Ibid, 121.
3. Vaughn, With Crook at the Rosebud, 44.
4. Ambrose, Crazy Horse and Custer, 417-418.
5. Vaughn, With Crook at the Rosebud, 44-45.
6. Ambrose, Crazy Horse and Custer, 420, and Bourke, On The Border with Crook, 311. Interview with Crazy Horse after his surrender to Gernerall Crook at the agency.
7. Ibid., 124.
8. Finerty, War-Path and Bivouac, 125.
9. Ibid.
10. Vaughn, With Crook at the Rosebud, 48.
11. There is a lot of conflicting data on the disposition of troops prior to the first shots being fired. Mills in My Story and Finerty in War-Path and Bivouac place Noyes and Mills on the south side of the creek with Henry, VanVliet and Chambers' battalions on the north side. Neil C. Mangum cites Maj Evans' official report for his belief on the disposition of troops prior to the battle. Evans' description is sketchy at best, however, Mangum's description fits how the troops were deployed at the beginning of the battle.
12. Ambrose, Crazy Horse and Custer, 420-421, and Vaughn, With Crook at the Rosebud, 50.
13. Bourke, On The Border with Crook, 311. Interview with Crazy Horse after his surrender to Gernerall Crook at the agency.
14. Alexander Dee Brown, The Fetterman Massacre, (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, First Bison Book printing: 1971), 178.
15. Vaughn, With Crook at the Rosebud, 50.
16. Ibid. 46; and Gray, Centennial Campaign, 120.

17. Finerty, War-Path and Bivouac, 130.
18. Mangum, Battle of the Rosebud, 59-60.
19. Bourke, Diary of John Gregory Bourke, 406-408.

20. Follow and Support Force: A committed force which follows a force conducting an offensive operation, normally an exploitation or pursuit. Such a force is not a reserve but is committed to accomplish any or all of these task: destroy bypassed units; relieve in place any direct pressure or encircling force which has halted to contain the enemy; block movement of reinforcements; secure lines of communication (LOC); guard prisoners, key areas, and installations; secure key terrain.

21. Vaughn, With Crook at the Rosebud, Appendix B, 229.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

This study, which climaxes with the "Battle of the Rosebud" briefly addressed the formation of national policies and objectives toward the Black Hills and the Great Sioux Nation. Those policies and objectives were molded into a military strategy which was used to form Sheridan's operational campaign of 1876. Crook implemented the operational campaign into his Winter Campaign of 1876, which culminated with the failure at the "Battle of Powder River." This failure led Crook to organize the "Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition." This expedition subsequently moved over two hundred miles in fourteen days with over 830 cavalrymen, two hundred infantry, and over one hundred wagons from Fort Fetterman to Goose Creek, near present day Sheridan, Wyoming. At Goose Creek, Crook established his support base and organized for combat. On June 16th, the expedition set out on a "search and destroy" mission against the "hostiles" in the uncaded territory. This movement culminated with the "Battle of the Rosebud."

### Threading the Needle

As the reigns of power passed from President Johnson to President Grant, so did the Indian problem on the western plains. The Grant administration manipulated the political situation to solve his dilemma in the Black Hills. Three months after Grant took office, Congress strengthened the peace process initiated by the Johnson administration by authorizing the appointment of a new Board of Indian Commissioners to oversee the regular Indian Bureau and ensure fair treatment for the Indians. Grant countered this action by authorizing Sherman and Sheridan to issue a general order restoring the treaty of 1867 with the Sioux to its original form, putting the unceded territory back under the army's control. The national policy in the early 1870s was to ensure white access rights through the unceded territory, while enforcing most of the treaty rights won by the Sioux. Thus, Grant was successful in appeasing the peace lobby and Indian rights activist by protecting Indian rights in the Black Hills from individual trespass, while the government sponsored annual expeditions to look for routes of passage through the territory by rail and road.

When Terry's expedition discovered gold in the summer of 1874, unauthorized trespass greatly increased with



a full-scale gold rush into the Black Hills. Grant continued his policy, ordering the Army to clear the Black Hills of trespassers until a solution could be found. The Army finally cleared the Black Hills of unauthorized trespassers by April of 1875, with promises to the miners that the government would negotiate access rights for those who were driven out.

Grant was unsuccessful in negotiating with the Sioux delegation that was summoned to Washington to meet with him. When the Sioux Chiefs refused to discuss the sale of the Black Hills, Grant sent an expedition to confirm the value of the uncaded territory. Once the reports were confirmed, Grant hardened his policy toward the Sioux. He chose not to enforce the "no trespass" law against the miners. If any whites were killed in the uncaded territory, the government would place blame on the Sioux and have an excuse of putting the "hostiles" back on the reservation. If the Sioux left the whites unmolested, they would eventually be overrun and lose the Black Hills to the sheer mass of white trespassers. Grant won either way.

Grant successfully separated the docile reservation Sioux and the "hostiles" in the uncaded territory with the general order that Sherman and Sheridan produced in 1869. All Indians in the uncaded territory were branded hostile, and thus were subject to army control. Grant also replaced those in his cabinet and subordinate

posts that did not support his views on pursuing the Black Hills. He set all the conditions. Now he had only to wait for an incident he they could blame on the Sioux or make a case that the white population was endangered by the hostiles in the uncaded territory.

Grant brought Sheridan and Crook to Washington to discuss military options on 2 November, 1875. At this time, Grant tied the military solution to national security policy and objectives that included acquiring the Black Hills, and returning the "hostiles" to the well defined reservation. Grant still had a political problem with the country split between Indian rights and "manifest destiny", the right to exploit any unowned land. His solution was to have the Department of the Interior issue an order on December 6, 1875, for all the Indians in the uncaded territory to return to the reservation by 31 January, 1876, or be branded hostile, and thus subject military action. With this order, Grant had successfully set the conditions for war, squarely placing the blame on the so called "hostiles" if they chose not to obey the order. The military had clear and concise military objectives once the deadline for compliance had passed.

#### Operation Level Of War

Sheridan's plan centered on temporarily cancelling the boundary between the Department of the Platte and the Department of the Dakota. Sheridan had Crook and Terry plan

separate operations in the same area of responsibility. They were to operate independently, keeping Sheridan informed back in Chicago. This violated unity of effort and unity of command. Sheridan was the overall commander who would resolve any conflicts between the two separate commands. However, his decision to stay in Chicago sacrificed any responsive mutual support that one command could give to the other due to immature lines of communications. It took an average of eight days for communications to travel one way to Chicago. This further isolated the separate commands.

Sheridan had properly identified the Sioux center of gravity, the Sioux villages. The destruction of the Sioux villages in the hard winter months was critical to his plan. The Indians were generally immobile and dependent on their food stores and pony herds, which were kept in relatively fixed locations during the winter months. If he waited for summer, he knew it would be almost impossible to locate and fix the villages long enough to destroy them.

Crook was to operate in southern Montana and northern Wyoming, concentrating around the Powder River country and the Rosebud Valley. Terry was to operate from northern Montana, around the Dry Fork of the Missouri. Terry sent word he was snowed in and could not move his unit to conduct the winter campaign. This left Sheridan with only fifty percent of his force deployed for the winter

campaign. Because of his decision to conduct two separate operations, Terry's failure to move did not adversely affect Crook's operations.

Crook was to conduct a "search and destroy" mission with only a vague idea of where the enemy was. His intelligence reports placed Crazy Horse's village somewhere between the Powder River Valley and the Rosebud Valley. Crook chose to use pack trains to support his cavalry in the field. This increased his mobility at the cost of the length of time he could sustain his force in the field. He gave Reynolds clear and concise orders to capture the Indian food stores, which would allow the command to further sustain itself for future operations. Reynold's failure to comply with Crook's order forced the command to retire from the field prior to Crook accomplishing his mission during the winter months.

Reynold's failure at Powder River expanded the war from a police action that was to round up a few independent camps, to a full scale war with a united Sioux nation. By the time he returned to Fort Fetterman he had lost his chance to find, fix, and destroy the winter camps. The only thing left was to begin preparation for the summer campaign. Unfortunately, neither Crook or Sheridan realized the full impact of the failure at Powder River and how it was going to unite and harden the Sioux resolve to fight and die for the uncaded territory in the Black Hills.

### Sheridan's Summer Campaign of 1876

Sheridan stayed with his earlier strategy. The Summer Campaign consisted of three separate and independent actions, all working toward the center of the unceded territory, the Little Big Horn Valley. The same problems with unity of effort, unity of command, and communications with Sheridan still existed. Sheridan nevertheless, chose to stay in Chicago and maintained control of the overall operation.

There was no hard intelligence on the number or location of the "hostiles." Each command was sent out on an axis of advance with the manpower and equipment to operate and destroy any "hostiles" with which they came in contact. A major intelligence failure, along with the arrogance of the Army, vastly underestimated the strength and fighting ability of the Sioux. Sheridan did not plan for or provide the flexibility to have his commands mutually support each other. The possibility that the Sioux could attack or isolate one command was never considered. Under these conditions, Crook concentrated fifteen companies of cavalry and five companies of infantry at Fort Fetterman for his part of the operation.

### Doctrine

The Army was still fighting under conventional doctrine that was developed during the Civil War. The only change was that the cavalry dismounted after they achieved

initial shock and fought as infantry. These conventional tactics, techniques, and procedures practiced by the Army could not fix an enemy like the Sioux as a fighting force. The Army achieved some success in fixing and destroying villages that served as logistic centers for the war parties. However, it was very difficult, if not impossible, to bring a mass of Sioux warriors to decisive combat unless they chose to become decisively engaged.

The army never developed a doctrine for developing and processing intelligence to best determine the enemy's disposition and most likely courses of action. "Search and destroy" missions consisted of long marches, with vague intelligence, and usually ended with fighting the Sioux on his terms. This made it almost impossible to gain the initiative in the fight.

#### Search and Destroy

Crook organized the Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition on May 28th. He was on the move the next day. He had assembled his force from smaller posts that were scattered throughout the Department of the Platte. Many of the officers had Civil War experience, but they did not have the opportunity to train or fight as a large unit since that war. Crook did not conduct drills nor discuss actions on contact or standing operating procedures for his newly formed command. This resulted in poor and inconsistent standards and the inability to react quickly as a single

force under combat conditions. Crook also was very creative, which made it nearly impossible to guess his intentions throughout the operation. Everyone knew the village was the target, but beyond that, Crook kept his subordinates in the dark.

Crook organized his command and control structure well. He organized the cavalry in four separate battalions under the regimental control of Royall. The five companies of infantry were organized in two battalions under the control of Chambers. This organization greatly assisted Crook's flexibility and response time to deploy troops during enemy contact. Without knowing the commander's intent, however, it was still not fully effective.

Security of the force was not consistent throughout the operation. Crook did not take the time to train his force prior to the campaign. There was no standard operating procedures for security or actions on enemy contact. The command had the knowledge and the ability to protect the force. They demonstrated sporadically throughout the movement phase their ability to attain a high state of readiness and security. The trouble was that it changed day to day. If Crook or one of his senior officers thought the command was in danger, they positioned pickets in critical locations and had platoons saddled and ready to respond at a moments notice. The problem was they thought they were only in danger when they passed a site of a past

battle or knew that the ground they were crossing was sacred to the Sioux. Otherwise, they assumed an administrative movement posture with little or no security.

Crook had gambled on attaining Indian scouts. He traded the ability to hire forty army scouts for a party of Crow and Shoshone scouts. Crook had built his reputation as a great Indian fighter using Indians to catch Indians. His dilemma at the beginning of the Summer Campaign was that he had neither civilian army scouts nor Indian scouts. He did have three excellent army guides, all of whom proved invaluable throughout the campaign. These guides were his only eyes during the first days of the campaign. They knew every inch of the terrain and understood the Sioux way of war. However, by the 2nd of June Crook was becoming so concerned about his lack of Indian scouts, he decided to strip his eyes and sent his guides to convince the Crow scouts to join him. This decision contributed to Crook's turning in the wrong direction down Prairie Dog Creek and ultimately becoming vulnerable to attack on June 9th. Without Guards effort in convincing the Crows to join the army against their common enemy, the Sioux, it is highly unlikely the Crow would have joined the expedition.

Crook could have taken three or four days to train his subordinate units to fight as a larger force. Most of the officers were veterans of the Civil War, but had not fought any large scale conflicts since. His force probably



would have performed much better if they had the opportunity to rehearse actions on enemy contact and procedures for securing the force on the move. While they were training, Crook could have used those three or four days to secure the Indian Scouts that he needed.

Crook personally led the expedition toward Goose Creek where he was to rendezvous with Gward and the Crow scouts. He did not employ any counter-reconnaissance effort during movement. On June 6th, the command was compromised by Little Hawk, who reported directly to Crazy Horse. The command did not realize they were compromised on the 6th, but on the evening on the 7th they made contact with an unknown Sioux scouting party. Crook should have treated this as an enemy contact until he could prove otherwise. He still did not take any extra precautions and on the evening of the 9th a small raiding party attacked the command while they were in bivouac. Little Hawk returned and attempted a daring raid on the horse herd. The Expedition reacted well and drove the raiding party off. However, Little Hawk had no intention of getting decisively engaged. He was drawing Crazy Horse's line in the sand as a warning against further intrusion into Sioux territory. At this point, Crook should have taken the Sioux threat more seriously. The leaders and men of the Big Horn Yellowstone Expedition treated the contact as a small victory, instead of as a warning it was intended.

At this point, the expedition should have established set security procedures for the remainder of the campaign. Instead, Crook thought it had confirmed his ability to handle anything the Sioux could throw his way.

After the attack, Crook decided to head for his original bivouac site at Goose Creek. It was more secure and had the resources to sustain a large force much better than the site he had chosen at the junction of Prairie Dog Creek and the Tongue River. Due to his skirmish on the 9th and his quick retreat up Prairie Dog Creek, the Crow scouts that Guard was bringing back were convinced the Sioux had the army on the run, and they almost backed out. Guard convinced them otherwise, and ultimately brought them into the camp at Goose Creek.

Crook treated the Crow and Shoshone allies that joined the command on the 14th with great honor. He assessed their abilities and listened to their desires on how they wanted to contribute to the fight. Crook agreed to their desires and used his new allies in a scouting and reserve role. The Crow and Shoshone were treated with great respect and admiration by the troopers. The new allies enjoyed their elevated status and vowed to fight hard against their common enemy.

On the 14th, Crook concluded his final planning with his officers and new allies. He was going to base out of Goose Creek, leaving the wagons and a detachment behind.

The infantry were to mount mules acquired from the wagon teams, and four days of supplies would be mounted on pack trains to increase the mobility of the command. This caused a hardship on the mules and infantry, but allowed the infantry to keep pace with the cavalry.

On the 16th, the expedition moved out from Goose Creek with only four days of supply. Gruard reported that the enemy camp was in the Rosebud Valley, approximately thirty-five to forty miles away. Crook had just enough supplies to move and fight. However, he would have to capture food and ammunition stores from the enemy camp to extend his combat operations. If he could not capture any supplies, he would have to start back to his base camp on the third day.

Crook made a sound decision to mobilize his force. He stood little chance in catching the Sioux with slow moving wagons and while a large portion of his force was on foot. Crook knowingly sacrificed sustainability in the field for a highly mobile force. He had successfully tested this concept against the Apaches a few years earlier. Crook should have planned for emergency resupply. He lost his flexibility to operate more than four days in the field by not planning for resupply contingencies. The risk was increased by not having any hard intelligence on the exact location of the village.

Crook used combined warfare in his final march to the Rosebud. However, he lost control of the Crow and Shoshone during movement on June 16th. A large buffalo herd crossed the column and the Indian allies broke all discipline and fire control, shooting indiscriminately in the middle of Sioux territory. Crook attempted to stop them, but the allies ignored his orders. This undisciplined behavior contributed to the force being compromised on the 16th of June. Little Hawk and a small raiding party exchange insults and shots with the Crow and Shoshone scouts. It is more likely that Little Hawk and his raiding party that attacked on the 9th, maintained some contact with the expedition to discover Crook's full intentions. Little Hawk broke contact with the Crow and Shoshone scouts, and immediately rode off and reported Crook's progress to Crazy Horse.

Again, Crook did not take the time to train or establish any standard operating procedures between the Expedition and his new Indian allies. He treated his new allies with respect and dignity to make them part of the team. Crook let the Crow and Shoshone decide on how they would contribute to the fight, taking advantage of their capabilities and limitations. At this point, Crook needed to share his intent and vision on how he expected the command to move and fight. He had assembled the largest combat force since the Civil War without properly preparing

it to fight as a large unit. If the Crow and Shoshone agreed to strict discipline the night of the 15th, they probably would have ignored the buffalo herd on the 16th. Crook maintained good security and selected a defendable bivouac site the evening of the 16th. When he camped for the night, the expedition had covered thirty-five miles, the horses and men were exhausted. He knew that the expedition was compromised earlier in the day and had little chance of surprising the village.

### The Battle

The next morning he sent out a small party of Crow and Shoshone scouts to find the village. He had the rest of the expedition on the move by 0600. After approximately five miles, he entered amphitheater like the one he bivouacked at the previous night. His small Indian scouting party was still out to his front. Crook's men and horses were still exhausted from the previous days arduous march. The amphitheater provided a good location for the force to halt and rest the men and animals. The Crow and Shoshone scouts that were with Crook warned him that there was fresh sign of a Sioux raiding party in the area. Crook immediately deployed a small party of pickets along the lower northern bluffs. The rest of the command, were in an administrative rest halt. Crook knew he had been compromised the day before, but assessed the threat of attack low, and stood down his command in the heart of Sioux

territory. He did not use the terrain to his best advantage during the halt. He positioned the majority of his forces in the ravine formed by the amphitheater and was surrounded by high ground from all sides. If his intent was to use the amphitheater as a hide site, he should have positioned security forces along the key terrain to the north along Crook's ridge. This would have provided him the ability to see several miles to the north, which was the direction he believed the Sioux were located. More importantly, this would have given him possession of defensible terrain at the start of the battle.

However, the command was positioned in the low ground and was soon surprised by a large Sioux-Cheyenne force. The pickets were quickly being overwhelmed, when the Crow and Shoshone scouts under Randall acted independently and attacked directly into the Sioux charge. Randall's quick thinking, along with the tenacity of the Indian allies probably saved Crook's command from annihilation. They bought Crook the critical twenty minutes needed to organize and deploy his command.

The Sioux gained and retained the initiative throughout the fight. Crook was in a reactive mode through most of the battle. He deployed Van Vliet to secure his rear, with Henry securing the western flank and Mills and Noyes securing the eastern flank while Chambers moved up the center. Royall split off and soon joined Henry. Before

Crook realized what was happening, he was in the midst of three separate fights.

#### Van Vliet to the south

Sending Van Vliet to the south was initially a good move. Van Vliet turned back a Sioux force that was attempting to flank the expedition from the high ground to the south. However, once Crook had consolidated his main defense in the center, he should have moved Van Vliet to the center to link-up with his main defensive positions. Van Vliet was left well out of supporting range as Crook established his main defensive position on the high ground to the north. He also lost the fire power of two cavalry companies that were no longer in a position to influence the battle.

#### Royall in the West

Royall took three cavalry companies and joined Henry on the western flank. He took the initiative and attempted to clear the enemy off the ridge to the southwest. As he advanced, the Sioux withdrew. Royall took this as success, not realizing he was being lured out of supporting range of the main defense in the center. As Andrew and Foster overextended themselves to the west, Royall started to realize his predicament. When he received the order from Crook to close on the main defense, he quickly realized he was cut off and would have to fight through a growing Sioux

force over a mile and a half of rugged open terrain. He could not cross the open area without heavy casualties. He chose to send one company back, covering their withdrawal with his other four companies. He then chose to fight down ridge, which was the only defensible terrain he had available. As he fought his way back, he closed the distance he would have to move across open ground.

Royall and Henry fought a valiant withdrawal under pressure. They were facing five hundred or more Indians from three sides and suffered relatively light casualties until they reached Royall's third position where they had to cross through low ground with little support. Shoshone scouts were sent to assist Royall in his crossing. When Henry was shot, his men lost courage momentarily and left Henry as they withdrew. The Shoshones charged the on coming Sioux and saved Henry from certain death. Crook also sent Burt and Burrowes to lay suppressive fire while Royall's command crossed the low open ground to the main defensive positions. The expedition took over eighty-five percent of their casualties during this crossing. Royall's initial mistake of allowing himself to be drawn out of supporting range proved to be very costly. However, his leadership and skill in conducting his organized withdrawal ultimately saved his command from annihilation.

As Royall was fighting his way back, Crook grew impatient and tried to gain the initiative by sending Mills



and Noyes up the Rosebud Valley. When Royall was in position to cross, Crook had reduced the strength of his main defensive positions in half by sending eight cavalry companies with Mills and Noyes. This greatly reduced the support that Crook could provide to Royall. The Shoshones and Burt and Burrows were instrumental in withdrawing Royall from his third position. However, if Crook had waited until he consolidated his defense, he could have provided overwhelming combat power in support of Royall and greatly reduced his overall casualties.

#### Crook in the Center

Crook had consolidated his defense on the high ground to the north. He used Mills to shock the enemy and drive them from their positions. Mills then dismounted and reverted to an infantry role to deliver effective fire in the direction of the retreating Sioux. As he cleared Crook's Hill on his second charge, the infantry and Noyes' Cavalry moved north to consolidate the main defensive positions unopposed. Crook was still in a reactive mode and knew if he was going to turn the tide of the battle he would have to gain the initiative. He attempted this first by sending Chambers with his infantry to clear Conical Hill. He soon realized they were approaching the limits of mutual support, with the Sioux increasing their fire on Conical Hill as the infantry occupied it. Crook ordered the infantry to withdraw. As the infantry withdrew, they came

under increased attacks by the Sioux positioned to the west. Crook ordered Randall and his Indian scouts to charge the enemy, allowing the infantry to break contact and rejoin the main defense. After Randall pushed the Sioux back, they immediately withdrew on the heels of the infantry and rejoined the main defense.

The Sioux were harassing Crook from Conical Hill, but were not delivering effective fire. Crook ordered the attack more out of frustration to take action than to gain a tactical advantage. Several soldiers and allied warriors were wounded during this fruitless attack.

Crook was depending on Royall to join the main defense to free up units that could take the fight to the Indian village. He still believed it was approximately five miles up the Rosebud Valley. He settled on Van Vliet's return and then sent Mills and Noyes up the Rosebud Valley while Royall was still fighting his way back to the center. When Royall requested assistance in crossing the low open ground and after observing the punishment Royall was taking, Crook sent word for Mills and Noyes to return.

At this point, he put the survival of his command above all else. He promised to support Mills and Noyes in the attack and now realized that he could not fulfill that promise. He also might need Mills and Noyes to extract Royall from his predicament.

Mills and Noyes were about to enter very rough and close terrain up the Rosebud valley, the most likely place for a Sioux ambush, when Crook's messenger ordered them to rejoin the main defense. The route Mills chose was due west, then south up the northern slope of Conical Hill. As he charged up the hill, he flanked the Sioux positions. At this point, the Sioux withdrew under pressure. The Sioux warriors were growing tired and hungry, and chose to retire from the battle. Royall had already returned to the main defensive positions approximately an hour prior to Mills' return.

Crook had over twenty-five troopers seriously wounded, ten dead and his supplies and ammunition were nearly depleted. Crook now paid for his lack of foresight in logistical planning. He had committed all his animals to carry the infantry and supplies to the Rosebud. He had no way of bringing his supplies forward because he striped the mules teams to carry the infantry and supplies. At this point, he had little choice but to return to his supply base back at Goose Creek. He knew by the time he returned with the wounded, rested the men and animals, and reorganized, the Sioux would be long gone. Crook chose to rest his command for several weeks while waiting for reinforcements. He sent a combat report from Goose Creek on the 19th of June to Sheridan. However, it would take over two weeks for the information to reach Terry.

Crook's command had fought well as individual units. But Crook could never quite synchronize all his units on the battle field, and reacted throughout the battle. Through the fighting spirit and the tactically and technically proficient officers, NCOs, troopers, packers, and Indian scouts, the command walked off the battlefield with relatively light casualties. Tactically, the battle was a draw. However, at the operational level, Crazy Horse stopped Crook dead in his tracks, and took him out of the fight for the upcoming battle a week later at the Little Big Horn.

Some believe that if Crook had sent scouts across country to warn Terry, Custer could have been spared his fate. They may have found Terry or Custer in the allotted time and they may have convinced Custer to use caution based on Crook's failure to win decisively. With Custer's personality there are too many ifs. In all likelihood, Custer would not have changed his tactics based on Crook's fight. But that's another story.

Finally, the lessons drawn from this battle are as relevant today as they were in 1876. The use of combined warfare and the special considerations each force must take in account when fighting together. Crook had to consider the cultural differences with Crow and Shoshone the same way General Norman Schwarzkopf had to consider the employment of the combined force during Desert Shield/Desert Storm. He

had to adapt doctrine to fit the irregular type of warfare that was conducted by the Sioux. The lesson of not properly training and preparing your force, conducting rehearsals and drills hold as true today as it did for Crook. The major lesson for leaders, is that your subordinates have to know your intent and your vision for how the force is going to fight prior to combat. Once you're in the fight it's too late. Standards are keystone to building an effective fighting force. Soldiers and subordinate leaders will do exactly what they think is expected of them. Establishing and enforcing standards takes the guess work out of what they think the boss expects. These are just some of the valuable lessons that have been reinforced to me through this battle that took place over one hundred years ago.

## APPENDIX A

### TASK ORGANIZATION

#### Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition

Commander - BG George Crook

##### Staff

Captain A. H. Nickerson, 23rd Inf. A.D.C. ADG.

Lieutenant John G. Bourke, 3rd Cavalry, A.D.C.

Captain George M. Randal, 23rd Inf Chief of Scouts

Captain W.S. Stanton, Eng Corps. Chief Eng Officer

Captain J.v. Furey, AGM, Chief QM

Asst. Surgeon Albery Harsuff, Med Director

##### Surgeons

Patzki, Stevens, McGillicuddy & Powell

##### Guides

Frank Gruard

Louis Richaud

Big Bat

##### Reporters

Joseph Wasson - Alta California

R.E. Strahorn - New York Times

J. Finerty - The Chicago Times

W.C. McMillan - Inter Ocean

R.B. Davenport - New York Herald & Chicago Times

#### Big Horn Yellowstone Expedition Cavalry

Commander - LTC W. B. Royall (Commanded 3d & 2d Cavalry)

##### 3d Cavalry

Commander - MAJ A.H. Evans (reports to Royall)

Company A - LT Morton

B. - CPT Meinhold, LT Simpson

C - CPT Van Vliet, LT Leuttwitz  
D - CPT Guy V. Henry, LT Robinson  
E - CPT Sutorius  
F - LT B. Reynolds  
G - LT Crawford  
I - CPT Andrews, LT Foster, LT A. King  
L - CPT P.D. Vroom, LT Chase  
M - CPT Anson Mills, LT A.C. Paul, LT  
Schwatka

Evans' Battalion Total Strength - 327  
Mill's Battalion Total Strength - 207

#### 2d Cavalry

Commander - CPT H.E. Noyes (reports to Royall)

Company A - CPT Dewees, LT Peirson  
B - LT Rawolle  
D - LT Swigert, LT Huntington  
E - CPT Wells, LT Sibel  
I - CPT Noyes, Kingsbury

Noyes' Total Strength - 269

#### Big Horn & Yellowstone Expedition Infantry Battalion. (elements of the 9th & 4th Inf Rgts)

Commander - Major Alex Chambers, 4th Inf (overall  
Commander)

#### 9th Infantry

Company C - CPT Munson, 1LT Capron  
H - CPT A.S. Burt, 2LT Robertson  
G - CPT T.B. Burrowes, 1LT W.L. Carpenter

#### 4th Infantry

Company D - CPT A.B. Cain, LT Henry Seton  
F - CPT Gerhard Luhn

Infantry Battalion's Total Strength - 175

#### Shoshone Indians

Chiefs - Washakie, (Wesha and Nawkee (Sons of  
Washakie))

Shoshone Indians' Total Strength - 86

Crow Indians

Chiefs - Old Crow, Medicine Crow, Feather Head,  
and Good Heart

Crow Indians' Total Strength - 176

Packers

Chief of the Pack Trains: Mr Thomas Moore

Packers' Total Strength - 81 men, 250 mules  
(20 men - 16 June)

Wagon Trains

Wagon Master: Mr. Charles Russel

Wagon Trains Total Strength - 116 men, 106 Wagons  
(0 men & wagons - 16  
June)

Montana Miners

Montana Miners' Total Strength - 65

Big Horn & Yellowstone Expedition Total Strength - 1325



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